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By

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CHAPTER XX

ON THE EVE OF WAR

Liberal Social Policy—A Stubborn Fight—Increasing Bitterness—The Immunity of Carson—Attempts at Bridge-Building—Anglo-German Relations—A Lunch with von Kühlmann—The Warnings of a German Professor—The Crime of Serajevo—Two Warnings—The Last Stage—A Telegram from Bethmann-Hollweg—Reasons for Publishing It—The Belgian Issue—A Determining Fact—The German View.

I

FOREIGN affairs were less in the public mind in the two years before the war than at any time since 1906. The country was absorbed in its domestic politics, which were both complicated and tumultous. The Irish question threatened something like civil war, and Parliament was struggling with a mass of legislation, some of which seemed to be very unpopular, and all of which was hotly contested by the Opposition. The main Liberal idea in social policy at this time was to cover the chief emergencies of the working life—sickness, accident, unemployment, old age—with insurance, but this encountered mountains of prejudice and was said to be an unwarranted interference with individual liberty. Doctors were up in arms; popular newspapers denounced the "stamp-licking" conspiracy and called upon domestic servants and their mistresses to fight against the new tyranny. Undoubtedly the public was shaken. By-elections were lost, and timid Liberals said that Lloyd George was ruining the Party for a fad. There were weeks in 1911 and 1912 when the Government seemed to be staggering to its grave under the double burden of Insurance and Home Rule. On top of this came Welsh Disestablishment, like Home Rule, a debt of honour which Liberals could not have shirked without disgracing themselves, but scarcely attractive or popular fare for the electorate. The future seemed very obscure, and few of us dared look a day beyond the date in 1914 when the Parliament Act would operate to make the Home Rule Bill law. After that we expected a speedy dissolution and a swing of the pendulum which would probably end the Liberal movement for the time being.

It was a time of extraordinary bitterness, and there were moments when the most venerable institutions seemed to be tottering. The suffragettes were breaking windows and burning churches, and no one knew how to deal with them. Carson was at large arming and drilling a force ostentatiously proclaimed as a challenge to the Executive, which seemed either unwilling or unable to restrain him. The racial and religious feuds of North and South Ireland seemed more to resemble a Balkan blood-quarrel than the political contention to which Englishmen were accustomed, and they threatened to spread from Ireland to England. I was well aware of the reasons alleged for leaving Carson alone, but they seemed to me bad reasons, and I found myself in trouble with many old friends, and not least my Irish Nationalist friends, for saying so. The Irish hung together on this issue; they might fight among themselves, but all of them were against English interference in what they regarded as a domestic quarrel. Redmond saw himself fatally compromised in Irish eyes if he supported the coercion of other Irishmen, even though they were his bitterest opponents. To leave Carson alone, not to make a martyr of him, to let his movement peter out, as the Nationalists were convinced it would if it were not taken too seriously, were the prevailing counsels, and no one foresaw that a Republican army, to say nothing of Labour and Capitalist blackshirts, would presently claim the precedent for themselves. It seemed to me that this was one of the occasions on which a Government was bound to assert its authority, regardless of all arguments for expediency, and for once I saw Asquith unequal to the occasion—until at last he turned and faced it and took control of the War Office, after the inexcusable blunder which put a question about obedience to orders to the officers on duty at the Curragh. What might have happened next will be a conjecture to the end of time, but when Asquith did face a thing, he was both formidable and resourceful, and my own belief is that he would have rallied the country to him in asserting the authority of the Government, and on that footing have found a way out of these disorders.

There was no peace for editors, whatever line they took. Every day's letter-bag at the *Westminster* brought insulting letters, mostly anonymous; leading articles were cut out and sent back to me scored all over with abusive epithets. One little picture is sharply printed on my memory—that of a great lady who in happier times had invited me to her house, standing on top of the stairs which lead from the Ladies' Gallery of the House of Commons to the Lobby, and hurling extremely painful epithets at me as I went down. On another occasion I answered the telephone on my table at the office to find an eminent and very angry British musician at the other end speaking from his house at Hampstead. "Are you the editor of the *Westminster Gazette?*" "I am," I modestly replied, expecting a communication about a forthcoming symphony, but it was far otherwise. "Someone," he said in a voice quivering with rage, "has left a copy of your paper at my house. Please send at once and fetch it away." I suggested that if its presence was disagreeable to him, he had an easy remedy, but the voice persisted in a crescendo of anger, "Send at once, I tell you, send at once and fetch it away."

In common, I suppose, with most others who were occupied in politics, I had a hand in some of the numerous attempts to build bridges behind the scenes. A large bundle of correspondence is evidence of these activities. I was in touch with the Round Table group and certain Conservative members of Parliament, who were quite as anxious as we were about the course on which events were driving the two parties. The details are not worth recalling, but the search was, as usual, for formulas to save faces, and we were told that Carson was more amenable than his public utterances seemed to indicate. Some of our proceedings were pleasantly mysterious. I was taken one day to the house of an eminent Conservative, and through his telephone held a conversation with someone who, I was told, was a very important person and wished to talk to me, though it was not convenient to him to meet me. What he said seemed to be rather promising, and I thought I recognized the voice sufficiently well to justify me in repeating the conversation to Asquith, as I was plainly intended to do. Asquith received the communication with good-humoured attention, qualified with a scepticism which, as the event proved, was well-justified. I see from dipping into the record that Lang, the Archbishop of York, was asked to further our schemes by moving a resolution in the House of Lords. I corresponded with him for a time about that, but while we were exchanging letters, other things were happening.

II

The last weeks before the war can only be reconstructed if we remember this background of domestic politics against which the final scene was played out. Liberal Ministers and Liberal journalists were much reproached afterwards for their blindness in failing to foresee what was coming. It was a true bill, but it was true of everybody. One can no more conceive Conservative than Liberal politicians acting as either acted in the first seven months of 1914, if they had foreseen, or even thought it likely, that the country would be plunged into a great war at the beginning of August. If the Conservatives who were supporting the Ulster movement foresaw it, theirs would seem to be the greater condemnation. The truth is that no one foresaw it or could have foreseen it.

I am not going over this well-trodden ground in any detail, but my own case is, I think, fairly typical of the journalists engaged in foreign affairs during these times, and I may say frankly that I was more hopeful of British and German relations in the early months of 1914 than at any time since 1906. From 1906 till November, 1911, the prospect of war with Germany was always before us, and during the last part of this period we had lived in constant dread of it. But from 1911 onwards things had seemed to be gradually on the mend. The Morocco question had been cleared off the board by the Franco-German agreement which followed the Agadir crisis; the last Balkan crisis had been safely surmounted through the Ambassadors' Conference of 1913, and Grey had been publicly thanked by the Germans for his wise and impartial handling of that dangerous affair. We were now apparently following with Germany the policy of a Colonial Entente which had been the first step to our friendship with France. The naval question was always difficult, but it seemed to be simmering and to afford ground for hope that the Germans would at last realize that we were not to be outbuilt. I saw all these things more or less from the inside, and, taken together, they seemed to point to a *détente*. Both Harcourt, who was then Colonial Secretary, and Kühlmann reported cheerfully of their efforts to settle the African part of the projected agreement with Germany, and each said that the other had shown the best spirit. Grey seemed to see his way to the settlement of the Bagdad Railway question on the main condition that we required, namely that the last section from Bagdad to the Persian Gulf should be in British hands. It was said afterwards that Haldane's visit to Berlin had been a failure, but that was scarcely the impression I got at the time. I saw Haldane almost immediately after he returned, and he seemed not displeased. If he had got less than he had hoped, he had, at all events, he said, saved one Dreadnought, and "that was worth a return ticket to Berlin."

After the war broke out, Northcliffe charged me with having been unduly intimate with Kühlmann, and seemed to suggest that there was something treasonable in our relations. So far as I remember them, my talks with Kühlmann at this time were mainly about the Colonial settlement and our own domestic affairs. He was following the Irish question, as it was his business to do, with close attention and, I surmised, keeping his Government informed about it. He has since denied that he visited Ireland, and I have no reason to suppose this disclaimer to be untrue. But he seemed to be very well-informed about the Ulster movement, indeed better informed than I was myself, and he used to tell me that I underrated its seriousness. I told him what I sincerely thought—that the British people had a habit of getting themselves tangled up in what to the foreign eye would look like inextricable knots, but that they generally found unexpected ways of unravelling them at the critical moment. This may have been too sanguine, but it was what one would have wished a foreigner, and especially a German, to believe at that moment.

But there was one occasion in my intercourse with Kühlmann on which I have reproached myself with a certain stupidity. Towards the end of April, 1914, he asked me to lunch with him to meet Prof. Schiemann, the famous anti-Russian German historian, who was then visiting London. The place was the Carlton Restaurant, but Kühlmann had engaged a private room instead of the table in the public room at which we usually forgathered. We talked trivialities till the table was cleared and the waiters had gone; then Kühlmann invited the Professor to proceed with what he wished to say to me. He instantly plunged into the relations of Germany and Russia, and with growing animation painted them as extremely perilous and urgent. Striking his fist on the table, he said that Germany was threatened with an avalanche of semi-barbarians from the East and that she must act at once if she wished to save herself. Russia was planning new strategic railways to threaten Germany; she had expedited her method of mobilization and had announced for the coming September what she called grand manœuvres but "what I call a mobilization of a million men against the German Empire." Was Germany to sit quiet and wait until this destruction fell upon her? Would we or any other country in its senses do nothing while this menace at our doors grew to irresistible proportions? The sum of the matter was that war between Germany and Russia was inevitable and that, if Germany was to be saved, it ought to come quickly. Having developed this theme with an energy and intensity which I cannot exaggerate, the Professor rounded on me and asked whether England was actually going to step in between Germany and Russia, and in spite of her boasted democratic institutions throw her weight on the side of the barbarians and their despotism against the one Power which stood between Western Europe and the new incursion from the East.

I turned to Kühlmann and asked if he shared the Professor's opinions. He said he did not; he said he thought the Professor exaggerated, and that the danger was not so imminent as he said, but that he had wished me to hear the exponent of an opinion which undoubtedly was gaining ground in Germany and which might become formidable if European politics continued on their present course. I then took up the argument with the Professor and told him that if we and France had been compelled to make common cause with Russia, Germany had herself mainly to thank, since her attitude to us and her challenge to us by sea had compelled us to find safety in close relations with other Powers. I imagine that in his heart Schiemann did not disagree, for he belonged, I believe, to the party in Germany which had desired friendship with us as a means of insurance against the Russian danger, but he dismissed this as immaterial compared with the imminent danger with which Germany was faced.

I have no doubt now, in the light of the sequel, that I attached far too little importance to this conversation. I thought Schiemann to be one of the many Professors who from the time of Arminius Vambéry onwards had been obsessed with the idea of the Russian peril; and other Germans whom I consulted assured me that, though there had been great agitation in Germany on this subject earlier in the year, it was now calming down and had better not be stoked up again by comments from this side. But Kühlmann was not the man to arrange an interview of this kind in this elaborately careful way without some intention, and I imagine now that he wished me to understand that relations between Germany and Russia were at the danger point. If so, I do not at all blame him. The conviction of the German military party that the Russian peril was increasing and that the opportunity of grappling with it was more favourable than it ever would be again was undoubtedly of high importance in the crisis that followed. If they were willing to back Austria at the cost of war with Russia and seize upon Russian mobilization to precipitate war, it was in the belief that Russia, if given time, would be irresistible. To have realized this aspect of the situation more fully would certainly have been useful in the weeks that followed.

During the year 1915 I received anonymously from Germany, via Switzerland, a series of questions which imputed to me a wilful deceit about British dealings with Russia during these months. Unfortunately, I do not seem to have preserved the document, but I think I can recall it with sufficient accuracy. Would I venture to say that I was as ignorant as I had professed to be in these months that Great Britain was arranging a Naval Convention with Russia with the full knowledge of her warlike intentions? Would I deny that I, myself, had played the part of unofficial intermediary in this transaction? I am told that a German paper during the war published a highly circumstantial account of this supposed transaction, in which I was mentioned by name as having played this part at the instigation of Fisher and Sir Edward Grey. There was not a word of truth in it. Grey has told all there is to tell about the "naval conversations" with Russia, and, so far from my having been employed as an intermediary, I never even heard of them till long afterwards. I can only guess that the story arose from the accidental fact that once or twice during these weeks, I met the Russian naval attaché at lunch with Arthur Pollen, who was then naval correspondent of the *Westminster Gazette*. We lunched, if I remember rightly, once at the Automobile Club, and once at the Carlton Restaurant and, I suppose, were observed by some of the Germans. Is it possible, I wonder, that Kühlmann, too, supposed me to be engaged in this affair, and brought Schiemann on the scene to warn and enlighten me?

For the next few weeks all foreign affairs were swamped in the Irish question, but so far as we heard of them, they seemed to be running quite smoothly. Lichnowsky was in the cheerful mood which Grey described in the despatch which is in the last of the Foreign Office Peace series, and I had a talk with him in which there was no hint of trouble. Then, on June 28th, came the Serajevo murders. The London newspapers, including the *Westminster*, poured out their sympathy upon Austria, and vied with each other in expressing their detestation of the assassins. But none of them thought that a European war was threatened. The crime had taken place in Bosnia, that is, on Austrian territory, and to discover the criminals and bring them to justice seemed to be the business of the Austrian Government and of no one else.

III

On July 8th, Count Tisza made an exceedingly moderate speech in the Hungarian Chamber, and the Vienna correspondents spoke of the Monarchy proceeding with the greatest calm and reflection. If there had been anxiety at the end of June, it had calmed down before the middle of July. Then gradually we got the sense that something was going to happen. On July 15th I was called up on the telephone at my house in Sloane Street from the Austrian Embassy at eleven in the evening, and told that Baron Franckenstein, then Secretary of Legation, was on his way to see me. He came and remained for an hour and appeared to be in a state of great anxiety. But exactly about what I could not discover. He said that the Austrian Government had satisfied itself that the plot against the Archduke had originated in Serbia and that it felt bound to obtain satisfaction from the Serbian Government. He begged me, therefore, to use my influence in the Press and, so far as I could, with other newspapers, against encouraging the Serbians to resist. I assured him that if the Austrian Government could produce proofs of the complicity of the Serbs and made any reasonable demand for satisfaction, we should not only not encourage them to resist, we should advise them to give full satisfaction as speedily as possible. I reminded him that we had taken a much more serious view of the murder of King Alexander and Queen Draga than most other Governments had seemed to take, and that ours was the last European Government to withdraw its refusal to recognize the new Serbian régime. If there were now found to be more Serbian regicides, he might rely upon it that we at all events would not attempt to shield them from justice.

He did not appear to be satisfied, but kept repeating that the question was one of life and death for Austria and that it was very serious. I could only repeat that, if the Austrian Government had the proofs and would produce them, I could not see how it could be serious, for it would then be a simple question of justice in which no other Government, and certainly not our own, would wish to interfere.

On the following night, I was rung up again about the same time from the German Embassy and told that Baron Schubert, one of the Secretaries of the Embassy, was coming to see me. He, too, when he arrived seemed to be in a state of great anxiety. He told me substantially the same story as Franckenstein, but added that Germany would feel bound to support her ally. I returned the same answer to him, and said that if it was a mere act of justice that was required, everybody would support Austria, supposing her proof to be as conclusive as he assured me. But he, too, appeared to be dissatisfied and went away saying that the situation was extremely grave.

It was impossible to resist the conclusion that something more than was disclosed, something that was beyond the simple act of justice, was contemplated, and that this something was known to both the Austrian and German Ambassadors. I judged them to be extremely alarmed and anxious about the intentions of their Governments, and to be taking steps to soften the blow in this country. I thought the best thing I could do in the circumstances was to write in the sense in which I had spoken to Baron Franckenstein and Baron Schubert, and this I did on July 17th. On the following day I received from Franckenstein a long typewritten communication marked "Confidential," setting forth the proofs of Serbian guilt on which the Austrian Government relied. I have it before me as I write, and though other evidence was collected later, this presumably was what the Austrian Government was acting upon at the time, and all that it had then in its possession. It seems to me still, as it seemed then, extremely unsatisfactory, judged as legal evidence. A large part of it consists of extracts from the Russian, Italian, and Serbian Press protesting against the savagery which it alleged to have been let loose on the Serbs of Bosnia *after* the murder of the Archduke. Since Count Tisza himself had said that "the excesses directed against the Serbs were very detrimental and wrong," these protests were scarcely surprising. Of the other items, the most important were an extract from an article dated December 3rd of the previous year in a Croatian newspaper published in America, and an extract from a proclamation by the Committee of the Serbian

Society, "the Narodna Obrana," dated June 24th, calling upon their members to celebrate Kossovo day and reminding them that "the unfinished part of our sacred duty calls for us." This certainly breathed a rebellious spirit and might be called an incitement to violence, but it came nowhere near proof of the complicity of the Serbian Government in the Serajevo crime, and in any case, Englishmen had no means of judging of the importance of this Serbian Society or of the authenticity of the document.

Certainly this did not seem to point to a simple act of justice on conclusive evidence, and the conviction grew that something far different was contemplated. Then on July 23rd the Austrian ultimatum was launched and the whole situation was illuminated. I believe, on what I think to be good evidence, that, in spite of official denials, important people in Berlin had seen and approved of the ultimatum. The point is scarcely worth discussing in view of the Kautsky documents, which show that the ex-Kaiser encouraged the Austrians to go all lengths at this stage and practically gave them a free hand to do what they chose. But I do not believe for a moment that either Lichnowsky or Mensdorff knew what was coming. I imagine that they were merely told that their Governments were about to take strong action, and instructed to do everything in their power to prevent British intervention.

It is extremely difficult to get back into the atmosphere of the days that followed. Almost inevitably we read back into it the warlike passions that were kindled when war broke out. There were none of these in the middle of July, 1914. The public was puzzled, but so far as there was any discernible drift of opinion, it was strongly against being drawn into a quarrel about Serbia. There was none of the bracing of loins which is seen when a British Government is manifestly in conflict with another Government. A popular Tory paper could put "To hell with Serbia" on its bills and be supposed to have done a smart stroke of business, and the mass of people, to whatever party they belonged, looked confidently to a Liberal Government to save them from so outlandish an adventure as taking sides in a Balkan quarrel. At this stage only the few who followed foreign affairs knew what was involved.

My own view had always been that, if France and Germany fell to fighting on any issue, we should be drawn in. That conclusion followed from a simple weighing of the forces in Europe and the consequences to us of a German victory over France in the delicate balance of sea power which the Germans themselves had established. But even apart from this, the gross and obvious circumstances of a war between France and Germany would, I felt sure, tend to the same conclusion. In the last stages of the Agadir crisis, when the only question at issue seemed to be whether the French would give what the Germans demanded as compensation for the occupation of Fez, one of the best-known German correspondents in London came to see me and asked a very plain question. Did I really think that England would intervene if war came on what was so obviously a question between France and Germany? I said to him, "My dear Sir, you have lived in England for ten years and you know the English people. Can you really see them sitting still while the German fleet steamed through the Straits of Dover to bombard French ports, or while the German army wiped out the French and planted itself on the French coast?" He said "You have answered my question and we won't argue it further." But in July, 1914, this contingency seemed very remote from the Austro-Serbian quarrel, and in the minds of most Englishmen it could only be linked up with it if Germans and Austrians were determined to force it to the point at which it would embrace Russia and France.

Now, if Germans want to know why Englishmen hold them responsible for the war, the short answer is that this is precisely what they seemed to be doing in the last fortnight of July, 1914. The thing seemed incredible and impossible —first the ultimatum, so outrageously beyond anything that the facts seemed to warrant, then the deliberate and obstinate closing of the door against any and every proposal that might have kept the peace. We saw Grey, whom we knew to be absolutely honest, fighting desperately for the last chance, and we saw him, as it seemed, everywhere rebuffed. The thing seemed so irrational and so remorseless that we could scarcely believe our eyes. It seemed as if nothing could avail against this obstinate war-making, but to fight for peace until the last moment, and to aim at unity in the Government, if war came, were clearly the two imperative duties.

IV

The task of the Liberal journalist was one of extraordinary difficulty. An Opposition journalist might go ahead, declare boldly that this was a fighting business, and urge the Government to take all risks. A Ministerial journalist supposed to be in touch with the Government, or at least one section of it, could only have done this at the risk of contributing to the thing most to be feared, the shattering of the national unity and the break-up of the Government. Moreover, it had to to be remembered that every word written would be telegraphed to Germany and probably regarded as official. My letter-bag daily was filled with letters declaring it to be the supreme duty of the Government to keep out of this quarrel. They came from Conservatives as well as from Liberals, and I knew that there was a strong party in the Cabinet which was of the same opinion. I agreed with the writers of these letters so far as to believe that the one chance of peace was to fight for it up to the very last moment, and for Grey to keep his hands free as the sole possible mediator, as the other parties ranged themselves on one side or the other. The Government would thus be united in striving for peace, and on this line there would be the best chance of its remaining united, if war came.

The situation was beyond journalism, and all that the journalist could hope to do was not to do mischief. The tremendous and incalculable nature of the war which threatened, the necessity of the most absolute proof that we had done everything that mortal man could do to prevent it, the necessity, again, of keeping the public warned as the danger increased, were the essential points, and they had to be expounded as quietly and patiently as the tumult of the times permitted.

Keeping in view the special objects which the Liberal journalist was bound to have in mind, I do not think I went very far astray, but I was wrong on one point. I entered a protest against the Expeditionary Force being sent over sea, until the naval issue was decided. It was one of the maxims of the blue-water school in which I had been brought up that the British army should not be transported over sea until its communications were assured and the risk of invasion eliminated; and the military people seemed to be flying in the face of this principle. But I did not know then, what I knew a few days later, that the fleet was mobilized and concentrated in such a way as to cover the passage of the army, and still less did I know or believe that the Germans would remain in harbour and not make an effort to prevent the crossing of our army to France. A raid on some part of the coast and an attempt in force to prevent the crossing of the armies were almost universally expected at the outbreak of war, and on these points I shared the common opinion.

The work in the office was unceasing in these days, and I had little time for anything else. I entered into none of the groups of journalists or politicians who were preparing to act together for war or against war, and, not wishing to be bombarded with conflicting opinions, I avoided the House of Commons. It was enough that scores of correspondents kept saying that it was my special duty to say a decisive word for peace, and that I could not say it as they wished it to be said. I had no touch with the Germans or Austrians. Kühlmann, to whom I should naturally have expressed what I felt about German action, was strangely absent from the scene, and it would have been inhuman to worry Lichnowsky, whom I knew to be doing his utmost to restrain his Government. I saw Cambon once, and he told me in a few minutes all that I expected to learn about the French attitude and his torturing anxiety about our attitude. I had two short talks with Grey during the "twelve days." I ran into him on the stairs of the Foreign Office on Saturday, August 1st, and he told me it was possible that this would be his last week at the Foreign Office, to which I replied that in that case, next week probably would be my last week at the *Westminster*. I saw him again late in the evening at his room at the Foreign Office on Monday, August 3rd, and it was to me he used the words which he has repeated in his book, "The lamps are going out all over Europe, and we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime." We were standing together at the window looking out into the sunset across St. James's Park, and the appearance of the first lights along the Mall suggested the thought.

The next evening (August 4th) I found myself walking with Winston Churchill from Downing Street to the Admiralty across the Horse Guards Parade, and he enlarged in his lively and imaginative way on what was coming. "At midnight," he said, "we shall be at war, at war. Think of it, if you can—the fleet absolutely ready, with instructions for every ship, and the word going out from that tower at midnight. Within a week enemy airships may be sailing over this spot on which we stand and dropping bombs on the seats of the mighty."

V

I must go back for a moment to the previous Saturday, August 1st. On returning to my office that afternoon, I found on my table a telegram from Bethmann-Hollweg, the German Chancellor, addressed to me personally and begging me to publish the following despatch which he had sent to Count Tschirschky, the German Ambassador in Vienna, the previous day:—

> Berlin, July 30th, 1914.
>
> The report of Count Pourtales does not harmonize with the account which Your Excellency has given of the attitude of the Austro-Hungarian Government.
>
> Apparently there is a misunderstanding, which I beg you to clear up.
>
> We cannot expect Austria-Hungary to negotiate with Serbia, with which she is in a state of war.
>
> The refusal, however, to exchange views with St. Petersburg would be a grave mistake.
>
> We are indeed ready to fulfil our duty.
>
> As an ally we must, however, refuse to be drawn into a world conflagration through Austria-Hungary not respecting our advice.
>
> Your Excellency will express this to Count Berchtold with all emphasis and great seriousness.—(*Signed*) BETHMANN-HOLLWEG.

This reached me barely in time for publication in the last edition, and I had to make up my mind immediately. I decided without a moment's hesitation that it must be published, and published it was in the last edition of the *Westminster* of August 1st. At the same time I sent a copy of it to Grey at the Foreign Office.

In the subsequent weeks, and many times later during the war, I was severely criticized for having published this document, and told that I had played into the hands of the Germans, who were evidently attempting to hoodwink the British public into believing that they were acting pacifically. These criticisms were perhaps natural in the state of opinion after the war broke out, but I believe that in deciding to publish I did what I ought to have done and that I could not rightly have done otherwise.

My judgment was formed on very simple grounds. The telegram might be an effort to deceive; or it might be the serious intimation of a last-hour attempt by Germany to restrain Austria. In the former case it could do no harm, for British action would be determined not by what Germany said, but by what she did, and that would declare itself in a few hours. In the latter case I should incur the most serious responsibility, if I suppressed a document which offered the faintest hope of a new move towards peace. I had no means of judging which of these things it really was; the only question before me was whether I should give the public the opportunity of judging for themselves, and I had no doubt whatever about that. The risk of its being unduly influenced by such a communication was altogether remote at that stage in the negotiations, and the worst result could only have been a flicker of false hope, which a few hours would dispel.

Again, if publication created the false impression that Bethmann-Hollweg was working for peace, suppression would have done far worse. It would have left the Germans free to say that an English newspaper had refused even to let it be known that the German Chancellor was making a last effort, and that would have gone to pile up the supposed proof of our aggressive intention. I do not believe that any editor in like circumstances would have acted differently, and I only put the case because it was hotly debated without much thought for the position of the editor. The atmosphere of war was thrown over this controversy, and though we were at peace with Germany on August 1st, I was reproached as if I had been in treasonable correspondence with the enemy. All this was natural in war-time and was of little consequence, but one criticism I did greatly resent, and that appeared in what professed to be a diplomatic history of the war issued by the Foreign Office. This, I thought outrageous, or rather I thought it outrageous that the Foreign Office should have appeared to sanction the view of journalism and the responsibility of an editor which it implied. But those were days when suppression for propaganda had come to be thought virtuous.

What we have learnt since of German diplomacy at this moment has established beyond doubt that Bethmann-Hollweg and von Jagow were, in fact, making a last-hour effort to reverse the engine. It was too late; the ultimatum, the refusal of a Conference, and the attack on Serbia which they had abetted and encouraged, had made a situation in which the control had passed from them to the soldiers. But so far as it went, there is no reason to doubt that the effort was genuine, or that Bethmann-Hollweg's telegram to the *Westminster* honestly represented what he was trying to do. This telegram was naturally not included in the German documents published during the war, for these aimed at proving a complete solidarity between the Central Powers which were now fighting together, but the idea that it was a deliberate deceit can no longer be entertained. No competent student would say confidently in these days, as was said in 1914, that Austria was so completely the tool and vassal of Germany that the appearance of Germany remonstrating with her, as if she were playing a refractory and independent part, must have been a pretence.

A few days later R. E. C. Long, the Berlin correspondent of the *Westminster*, presented himself at the office, telling a breathless tale of the last days in Berlin. Among other things he brought me a message from von Stumm, then Under-Secretary at the German Foreign Office, whom I knew well when he was at the German Embassy in London. "Tell Spender from me," said von Stumm, "that he is that most dangerous kind of Englishman, the moderate jingo." It was his parting shot, and I am not sure even now that I know what it meant.

VI

But by that time we were thinking of nothing but Belgium. For nine Englishmen out of ten, everything else after August 1st was swept up into the question of Belgium. The evident fact that Germany was going to violate Belgian neutrality was not only for us the clear *casus belli*, but clinching evidence of the aggressive intention in what had gone before. For those of us who feared divisions in the Cabinet the moment of greatest relief was when Belgium decided *proprio motu* to resist the invader. I hoped that she would resist, and did not doubt that resistance was the only honourable course for a spirited people. But it was so evident that neither we nor the French could defend her from the immediate consequences that I felt great scruple about any appearance on our part of urging or coercing her. The decision, it seemed to me, must be her own, and for some hours there seemed to be a possibility that she might retire and leave the Germans to march through her territory under protest. The importance of this point has scarcely been brought out in the diplomatic histories of the negotiations. It was not only the invasion of Belgium, it was even more the decision of Belgium to resist invasion, that determined the issue, for on the Sunday night the party which argued that we could not be "more Belgian than the Belgians" and that a "simple traverse" of Belgium would not require our intervention was still strong; whereas on the Tuesday there was all but unanimity about the imperative duty of assisting the Belgians when they called upon us to come to their assistance in fulfilment of our treaty.

For reasons already explained, I never doubted that we should be bound to intervene if France were involved in war with Germany, and on that supposition the invasion of Belgium could only decide the earlier or later of our intervention. But for those who took a different view the distinction between the "simple traverse" of Belgium and the attack upon a resisting Belgium was undoubtedly important, and I think it absolves them from the charge of a sudden and inexplicable turnabout at the last moment which was brought against them by pacifists after the event. Morley to the end felt a grievance against certain of his colleagues whom he supposed to have "veered with the wind," but men who held one view, when it seemed doubtful whether Belgium was going to resist, might quite honourably and logically have taken a different view when they knew that she was going to resist, and that she relied on us to help her in resisting.

Some eight years later I found myself discussing these events with a distinguished German, who was in a position to know what was passing in Germany at this time. "Did you realize," I asked, "that in invading Belgium you would bring us in and turn our doubts into certainties?" "We did," was the answer, "and we counted on that from the beginning." "Then why did you do it?" "Because if we went to war at all, there was nothing else to do." "This, then," I said, "is what Bethmann-Hollweg meant by saying that Germany was in 'a state of necessity?' " "Undoubtedly. And he spoke quite truly. For Germany the war on two fronts absolutely required the swift blow at the heart of France. If we had attacked from the East we should have been held up by the French defences and found ourselves powerless against a Russian attack on our other front." " But even so, was it not the greater danger to bring England in?" "No, of the two dangers we thought it decidedly the less. We expected to conquer Paris in spite of your Expeditionary Force, and then we should have been in a far more advantageous position against you and the French combined than we should have been against the French alone, if we had been held up on the other route and then exposed to a Russian attack. On military grounds it was a perfectly sound scheme, and only miscarried because our generalship was bad and our margin not quite enough. At any rate it was the only way, for the alternative would have doomed us to defeat from the beginning." In other words, the neutralized Belgium was an impossibility for the German Empire in the war "on two fronts."

But against this I may set another piece of evidence, which points at least to a division of opinion among the high military authorities in Germany. An American diplomatist who was in Berlin at the beginning of the war told me in later years of a conversation he had had with a very important German general, who was dining with him in the second week of August, 1914. My friend said to the general: "I suppose you are well satisfied now that war has come?" "By no means," was the answer; "I consider Germany to be in a position of the gravest danger. The entrance of the British has altered everything and thrown an incalculable weight on the side of the enemy. England may be weak now, and we may not feel her power at present, but I greatly fear her wealth and numbers and tenacity. No, no, I am not satisfied; the situation is most grave." This was a fortnight before the battle of the Marne.

I imagine that in the last days before the war there was the same heat and confusion in Germany as in other countries. But in Germany the one point fixed was the military scheme of scientific strategy which, in the name of its necessity, made a mouthful of Belgium. It had been prepared over years; there was no other, and it could not wait without losing its efficacy until policy or morals had been considered.

CHAPTER XXI

THE JOURNALIST IN WAR (1914–18)

The Press in War—The Atmosphere of War—Mechanical Difficulties—A Military Correspondent—Visits to the Front—What was it Like?—The Vast Solitude—A Battle on the Somme—The Feelings of the Civilian—At Verdun, 1916—With the Wounded—French and English Characteristics—The British Infantryman.

I

IN the summer of 1909 I suggested to Mr. Balfour that in a speech which he had promised to make to the Imperial Press Conference of that year he should say something about the duty of the Press in war. He wrote back promising to do his best, but said he could think of nothing to say except that "the Press had better keep quiet in war-time." Would that it had been as simple as that! Within a very few days of the outbreak of war all the Governments discovered that the Press was going to play a vital part, and began to show a solicitude for editors and writers which was both new and flattering. So far from ceasing when the guns began to speak, the war of tongue and pen became more clamorous than ever, and something called "propaganda" was said to be as important as munitions. Much of it was corrupting to the Press, and a fatal snare to politicians; and truth certainly went deeper into her well while it lasted, and only painfully emerged when it was over. It is a time which no journalist can look back upon with pleasure; but while war lasts, the calling of battle-cries, the rallying of one side and the depressing of the other, and incidentally the deceiving of both through the skilful use of newspapers, will be an inevitable part of it. At all events, the last thing that the Press was expected to do in the Great War was to keep quiet.

I think I was as deeply convinced as most of my fellow journalists that our part in the war was imperative and just, but, as in 1899, I was slower than most in getting into the atmosphere of war. The old habit of arguing rather than asserting persisted, and I was not clever at the vigorous scene-painting which was now in demand. Before six weeks were over I had got myself into serious trouble by saying in answer to a German paper that our object in going to war was not, as it alleged, to humiliate and destroy Germany, but to establish law and freedom against German militarism. I hope it was true, but a chorus immediately went up that the *Westminster* wished to "spare the Germans," and for months it was scornfully described by more "patriotic" newspapers as the leader of "spare-the-German Press." One was always in difficulty about things of this kind. To recriminate was unseemly, but to let them be constantly repeated without answer was to run a very serious risk, for, as many more important men than myself discovered, to give a dog a bad name was in war-time a sure way of hanging him. More than once in these years I found myself obliged to fight for the good name, if not the actual existence, of the *Westminster* against flouts and gibes which in normal times one would have passed in silence, but I endeavoured to do this without the appearance of loss of temper.

On the other hand, there were great consolations. The sense of a close touch with the reader, and the constant evidence that he gave one of his interest and sympathy and careful reading and criticism of what was written in the *Westminster*, had always been one of the great pleasures of editing it, but never did I have this support in the same degree as during the years of the war. It was natural that the circulation should increase in war-time, but the increase seemed to bring in exactly the class of readers to whom the *Westminster* wished to appeal; and from all parts of the country they wrote grateful and sympathetic letters encouraging the editor to go on, and saying that what he gave them was what they were looking for and what helped them most in these heavy times. I am not passing judgment on others who were addressing a different audience in what seemed to be more forcible tones, but they sometimes forgot that there were thousands of men and women to whom a quieter voice was welcome. These, too, wished their patriotic faith to be strengthened and confirmed, but they soon tired of mere denunciation of the enemy and would not be starved of argument and reason.

The mechanical difficulties of producing newspapers became very great as the war went on. The *Westminster* staff was, as newspaper staffs go, a small one, but it sent ninety men to the war from its various departments, too many of them never to return. Early in 1915 my assistant-editor, Geake, who was almost as much the *Westminster* as myself, fell seriously ill, and he could not be replaced. For the greater part of the four years nearly the whole of the editorial work was done by Alfred Watson and myself, and when either of us was away, which was very seldom, we had to borrow a hand from outside. We both of us wrote more than I dare think of, and but for Watson's indefatigable industry and versatility I could scarcely have survived. It took long planning to arrange for any period of absence, and what would have happened if either of us had fallen ill for more than a few days neither of us had any idea. As in the Boer War, I had again the remarkable good fortune to find a military correspondent of uncommon ability, E. D. Backhouse, who wrote under the pen-name of "Edmund Dane." I had never seen him or heard of him when the war began, but one article on the strategy of the war which he sent me as a chance contributor decided me to send for him at once and ask him to take up the regular work of writing on the military aspects of the war. He was not a soldier, and the study of war had been no more than his hobby, but he had remarkable flair, a good style, and an accurate knowledge of history. He was seldom wrong and very often remarkably right, and never more so than when he said with complete confidence on the day after the attack of March 21st, 1918, that the Germans had failed, and that the position they held was far short of what was necessary if they were to achieve their object. Churchill said the same thing some years later, but Backhouse was, I think, alone among military writers in saying it at the time. I pondered long before I passed it, but my confidence in him was by this time so great that I felt sure he was right.

Our naval correspondent during the war was Arthur Pollen, an old friend and contributor, and a real expert, who presently co-operated with Hilaire Belloc in *Land and Water*. He had less to do than Backhouse, for the navy kept behind its smoke-screens, and did not encourage publicity about its proceedings. But Pollen's articles were of the highest quality, and carried great weight with the Service.

II

The Government necessarily in these times looked to newspapers to help it in obtaining recruits for the new armies. I felt that to be the most painful and repugnant of all my tasks. Here was I, fifty-one years of age, sitting in the safe shelter of a London office and urging young men, lads, children, to go into this hell—where I knew I should not go myself. It was we elders who between us had brought this catastrophe on the world, and we were asking our juniors to pay with their lives. It seemed even to make it worse that they took up their burden so gallantly, and uttered no word of reproach to those who had brought this terrible thing on them. This feeling was said to be morbid, and certainly one could not have yielded to it without becoming in fact a "defeatist," for if the young men did not go, we were bound to be conquered. But the pen often faltered, and there were certain things that came glibly from other elderly pens that I could not bring myself to write. Yet here, too, was evidence that the quieter note was appreciated, and letters came from officers and men in the trenches saying that they were grateful to writers who seemed to understand what war meant and what the soldiers were being asked to do and endure.

More and more I felt it to be an imperative necessity to see and understand for myself, and before the end of 1914 I was twice in France for short spells, once on the self-appointed mission described in another chapter. For the reasons already stated, it was impossible to arrange for long absences, but during the next three years I was five times at the front and on the British and French lines alternatively. Between the two I was at one time or another on nearly all the fronts from Verdun to Ypres, and have a memory of that stupendous battle-line which can never be effaced. One saw a little more on the French lines than the British: the British were careful of their guests and would not let them go into the trenches; the French took the view that the civilian who came did so at his own risk and should be allowed to go where he chose. Sometimes I think they took a little secret pleasure in showing an elderly civilian what it was like.

What was it like? I know of no descriptions which would enable one to realize it, unless one had seen it. Certainly it was not like anything that one had read about war, or conceived war to be till then. Going along the front on almost any normal day was to get an overwhelming impression of solitariness and solitude. One afternoon in the autumn of 1917 I sat for the best part of an hour sketching on Vimy Ridge. During that hour I do not think I saw a human being except our own little party, or heard a sound except that of a few intermittent guns. Lens was away to the left covered in a little pall of poisonous smoke through which its tall chimneys occasionally gleamed in the sun, and across the plain in front ran the spills of chalk which showed the lines of trenches, converging to the point where the great Hindenburg line began. In these trenches there were at least 300,000 men on one side and the other, but all through that hour, except for an occasional shell coming or going there was not a sound or a sign of life. At the end of the hour I heard a rustling sound in the bushes below me, and there came painfully out of the wood a little party of walking wounded with bandaged arms and heads making for the dressing station behind.

All along the Champagne front, the Aisne front, the Argonne front, the scene was the same on a normal day. One could travel a whole day very near the lines without hearing a shot fired. Vast armies lay buried watching each other and seemingly doing nothing. It was the only way in which they could have even existed through the four years, and often I have heard French officers argue that the British were doing wrong to sacrifice men in stirring up the enemy—doing it, I may add, not a little under the provocation of French newspapers which more than hinted that they were contributing less than their share. I have seen terrible and spectacular night scenes which enabled me to understand what this French criticism meant, but on the whole, for the greater part of the time, on both fronts the life of the soldiers was one of just lying still in mud and dirt and seeing that the enemy did the same. For three years out of the four, half the young manhood of Europe lay buried over against each other, doing nothing. The one thing I found most envied by the soldiers I talked to was my capacity to walk about.

Then after weeks of preparation—preparation so elaborate that one could scarcely imagine its escaping the notice of the other side—one section was chosen for a breakout, and when the hour struck an incredible weight of metal was hurled from one side to the other. I saw one or two of these offensives so far as they could be seen. From the heights one looked down on a blur of smoke and gas covering the horrible scene; on the plains one was generally from two to three miles behind the fighting line and with obstacles in front which hid it altogether. The stupendous thing was what one heard. I wrote an analysis of the sounds as heard from a four-inch battery in a certain battle on the Somme, and the Censor paid me the compliment of cancelling the whole article on the ground that it was so accurate that it would reveal our gun-positions to the enemy. In front, extending along the whole eleven miles from Thiepval to Combles, was a chain of field-guns over which some enormous devil seemed to be sweeping his hands. Backwards and forwards over these miles the sound ran in an incredibly swift staccato, rising and falling in a stupendous rhythm from one end of the chain to the other. Then on the line on which one was standing were the four-inch batteries parallel to the field guns, but farther apart. These struck a deeper note, but deeper still was the voice of the nine-inch howitzers another mile behind, and then loudest and deepest of all the voices of "Grandmother" and two other seventeen-inch naval guns far in the rear, which came in like the big drum in an orchestra at intervals of so many silent bars. It is customary to speak of the noise of guns as deafening, but except in an enclosed space I never found it so. On the vast open plateau of the Somme it was more like a thunderstorm, against which one could easily speak and hear. The total effect was magnificently orchestral; there were great waves of sound and sudden chords of extraordinary beauty. But the censor specially frowned on my attempt to express some of these in musical terms.

As a mere display of human energy the thing was stupendous. Battery on battery, one behind the other, over a space eleven miles long and five miles deep, all hurling tons of metal into space for hours together, more tons, I suppose, than were discharged in all the battles of the world put together before 1914—and the same number of tons coming over from the other side and raising sudden black fountains from the ground wherever the eye travelled. I was three hours in the field on one occasion, and when I turned back, the uproar was unabated and nobody knew what had happened. I think we advanced two hundred yards that day on two miles of the front. And this was only one of a hundred battles on the same or a larger scale. There was something sublime and awful in the sight and sound of it, and I cannot deny that I felt the thrill of the fighting man together with a torturing anxiety about what was happening on the other side of the ridge, but looking back on it, it seems a nightmare of insanity and cruelty.

Not to be able to see beyond the ridge was always an exasperation. The soldiers were resigned to it, and many told me dejectedly that they expected to see no more of the war than the few acres on which they were interminably planted, and would in all likelihood leave their bones. But I had come out to see, and was always looking for some hilltop or place of vantage from which something could be seen, and perpetually failing to find it. One day in a wild moment I thought of going up in a sausage balloon and my guide solemnly made application for me. The answer was, "If Mr. Spender will certify in writing that he is an expert parachutist, his application shall be considered." I understood the meaning of that when in the following year on another front I saw a sausage balloon attacked by an aeroplane.

III

What are the feelings of the elderly man of peace who suddenly finds himself in these scenes? Of course, I can say nothing of the more terrible experiences, those of the men who went "over the top," who engaged in the fearful solitary enterprises of trench raids or of flying over the lines. Seeing it only on the fringe was to be constantly humbled by the thought of the incredible bravery of those who dared these things. Like other visitors, I dipped in and came out and returned almost every night to a good dinner and comfortable bed. But necessarily I was often under shell fire, and I have heard the sniper's bullet go singing past my ears and felt the shrapnel falling on my tin hat. And speaking for myself I think I answer the question quite honestly when I say that I was often afraid before, and in an odd way afterwards, but seldom afraid when I was in it. The stir and bustle and sense of company, the feeling that we were all in it together, the absorbing interest of the terrible near thing, kept one going without thought of much else. Plato says that courage consists in knowing what ought to be feared and what not. But that was no help at all. I saw gallant men falling flat to avoid shells which seemed to me at a comfortably safe distance, and earned unmerited marks for gallantry because I stood upright and went on taking notes. Of the noises in the air I never could be sure which were our shells and which the enemy's shells, and found it a good plan to assure myself that they were all our shells. I went down a tunnel to see a mine preparing under the enemy's trenches and was glad to be somewhere so dry and safe. An hour later it was blown up by another mine which happened to be in another tunnel beneath it. I was in one of three cars containing visitors which went out one morning from a certain headquarters, and for one of them which carried a distinguished foreigner a specially safe route was chosen. It received a "direct hit" on a high road five miles from the front and was wiped out with all its occupants. Things of this kind were constantly happening, but you saw thousands of men going about their business with complete unconcern, and you came to think no more about them than you would about the chance of being run over in Piccadilly Circus.

Yet occasions were staged in a manner which called for a conscious effort to brace oneself. I went into Verdun at the beginning of October, 1916, when the battle of the trenches was over. But the Germans were making a persistent effort to destroy the town, and seemed to have all the cross-roads and approaches accurately registered. We came from Bar-le-Duc by car on a day of driving rain, and went first to see General Nivelle, whose headquarters were in a bleak-looking house standing on a high down about seven miles to the west of the town. His charm and courtesy made a delightful impression, and I shall always remember the perfect accomplishment of the little lecture that he gave us on the strategical situation, and the neat precision with which he played with his pointer over the maps. As we left to go he said, "Gentlemen, I understand that you wish to go into Verdun. Well, let me see." Then out of his pocket he took a little black note-book, and after examining it a moment added, "I see that yesterday the number of high-explosive shells falling in Verdun between the hours of 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. was 400. To-day the visibility is lower and there will not be quite so many. Good morning, gentlemen."

Just outside the town we were met by an officer who made us an elegant little speech in the Gallic manner: "Gentlemen, the French Republic considers that the highest honour it can pay its guests is to take them into Verdun, but, gentlemen, I should add that the French Republic cannot guarantee to take them out." This was punctuated by a loud explosion at which the speech-maker laughed uproariously, and so the scene was set. I am bound to say that it satisfied expectations. We walked up and down that town for two hours to an accompaniment of shells scrunching through masonry, shells exploding violently on the stone *pavé*, shells bringing walls down and sending chimney stacks and tiles into the streets. And after each shock, as one listened, the horse-chestnuts came pattering down from the little trees that lined the streets. An Italian officer who was one of my companions seemed honestly to think it great fun, but I, as honestly, confess that I never had a more blessed sense of relief than when I got finally into the vast dug-out which provided shelter for the officers and men of the garrison. The sentinel we passed as we went into this burrow was killed and his place taken by another before we came out.

But all through this day and the following days when we went down the "arch of shells" into the Argonne and dodged the snipers in the woods, one was kept going by the extraordinary interest of the scene and the excitement of the moments when we raced past the danger spots. And if anything was needed to sustain one's spirits, it was to discover that among the stream of visitors to this front only one was judged to have been "fussy about shells" and he was going down to posterity as the typical anti-hero of the Verdun saga. They had made a verb of his name and construed it through all its tenses; they had invented a character for him and scenes in his domestic life; they said that he was a vegetarian with an inordinate appetite for soup. He was, I am glad to say, not of British nationality, and it seemed better to die a thousand deaths than to join him on this pedestal.

I know that Verdun entered like iron into the soul of the French. In the heart of the great dug-out was a hospital, and beside it a little chapel with lights in it, and there the dead lay and the wounded came to pray. I am not ashamed to say that the sight of it gripped me till the tears came, but out under the shells there was a kind of gallant gaiety which was extraordinarily French. There was the best of everything in the messes, the delicious wine of the country in big *carafes*, the *poulet en casserole* which might have been cooked at the Beaulieu Réserve, serviettes and table-cloths snow-white as in the best hotels. The *poilu*, too, had his share of the good things. Twice a day in the Argonne, where the trenches lay so close that French and German almost touched each other, a miniature train, heated from end to end, went the round of the French trenches bearing cans of steaming hot *bonne femme* soup. In all this business the French seemed never to forget the art of living, and behind these terrible lines, and even in the middle of them, they managed things so skilfully that one seemed half the time to be taking part in a cheerful picnic with the shell and the bullet as incidents in the entertainment, which one was expected to greet with applause and laughter. I never heard heartier laughter than when, on the encouragement of my guides, I put my head up over a trench and the sniper's bullet came whistling past before I got it down.

Somehow this kept one's spirits up and carried one through what would otherwise have been an exhausting time. To be almost alone in a heavily bombarded little town was, I think, the most formidable experience of the civilian who was not called upon to "go over the top," for there you were without the sense of support that numbers give, or the shelter that the trench and its dug-outs seemed to afford. But day after day of it, even after comfortable nights spent in safe quarters, did wear one down, and in 1916, when I had added ten days on the Somme to ten days on the Meuse, I came back thoroughly exhausted and wondering more than ever how mortal men could live through months and years of it. Certainly time hardened one to the sights and sounds; one ceased to start at explosions or wince at shells, but there was the unconscious effort of inhibition, and that must have told on any ordinary nervous constitution. The sense of having a set task in a given place which the wandering civilian never could have, was, I imagine, a great help, but when an elderly French General said with a sigh, "*La guerre a été beaucoup trop prolongée*," I understood what he meant.

IV

I never went to the front without visiting surgeons' dug-outs, casualty-clearing stations and hospitals, and sometimes I had little commissions from the medical authorities to inquire about this or that. It was an enormous relief to me to find that I could witness what I saw without flinching. That belonged entirely to the atmosphere of war. I certainly could not have looked on at an operation in an ordinary hospital before the war without fainting, and I am not sure I could now. But I have stood in the operating theatre of a French casualty-clearing station after an action and watched seven operations going on simultaneously—some of them amputations—and felt only an intense interest. I have seen men maimed and killed by falling shells, and, though filled with the pity and terror of it, was not unnerved. I have been with the stretcher-bearers from the trenches to the casualty-clearing stations and sat with the surgeon in his dug-out while he gave first-aid. I can imagine no scene of human suffering more heartrending than that in the vast hall of the Boulogne Casino—then called Base Hospital No. 14—after one of the battles on the Somme, when the beds crowded the floor spaces and overflowed on to staircases and corridors, and the surgeons moved about among the unsorted wounded and for lack of theatre space did "flash" operations on the spot, in the hope of saving life. That too, I have witnessed, and I can never forget the faint smell of ether, the groans of the wounded and dying, the pall of hell that was over it all. And yet, on the other hand, the same scene is a superb memory of skill and service and heroic endurance. The quickness of the surgeons, the merciful efficiency of the nurses, the coolness and composure and orderliness with which the incredible emergency was being met, the patient unselfishness of the wounded, the smiles on the faces of the men past hope —how shall one not remember this also as a triumph of the human spirit? It seemed to me that to see this side of the war, to satisfy oneself that everything possible was being done, and endeavour to speak truthfully about it, was one of the duties of the writer on this scene.

V

Being alternatively on the French and British lines led one to note certain contrasts in the characters of the two peoples. The French were for ever saying that we were "so rich," and held up their hands at what they deemed to be our gross extravagance. Behind the French lines the repairing shops, the lorry sheds, the staff-offices, the bakeries, were miracles of thrifty improvisation. Any old barn or derelict house was made to serve a purpose. Behind our lines were solid new structures, often of brick or concrete, but in any case new hutments brought from England. These were the source of the myth that ran among the peasants that we meant to stay in the country, for they could not imagine our spending all this money unless we had that intention. Again, the French thought that we spent an inordinate quantity of money and time on grooming, polishing and cleaning.

Especially we seemed to them to be infatuated about horses and their toilettes. Again and again I was asked what we were doing with all those horses on the Somme, and how could we spare the men to groom them? On the British lines you seldom saw an unwashed lorry; on the French hardly any that were not splashed to the roof with mud. Out of the trenches every British soldier had bright buttons, carefully brushed uniform, well-shaved chin and neatly cropped hair. The French *poilu* was often untidy and muddy, and quite often had a week's growth of beard. The contrast seemed in French eyes to be a reproach to us rather than to them. This was war, and how in war could we spare the time or the money for these refinements?

The French had a gaiety which was quite different from British humour, and our jokes were often as inexplicable to them as theirs to us. I remember repeating to a French officer who knew England well and spoke English, the parody of the "Hymn of Hate" which at one time was uproariously popular in the British lines :—

Whom do we 'ate by sea and land ?
Whom do we 'ate to beat the band?
England, England.

"Oh, but," he said, "you have got it wrong. You mean Germany, not England." "No," I said, "I haven't got it wrong; I mean 'England, England.' " But you can't really mean," he persisted, "that they are allowed to sing that." "Yes, I do," I said, "that's just the point of it." But explanations were useless, and I could see that he was genuinely shocked. On the other hand, if you had tried to explain to the Tommy the neat little banter which amused the *poilu*, you would have failed just as egregiously.

Wherever the French and British armies came into contact, it was impressed upon one that the two most linguistically unaccomplished nations in the world were fighting side by side. The gulf of language was seldom bridged; the French seemed to make no effort, and though some British soldiers tried conscientiously to master certain French phrases, the conviction that they ought to be pronounced in the English way and that no concession should be made to the weakness of the French in pronouncing them another way, rather frustrated the good intention. The British soldier billeted in the French village seemed to have established a complete understanding with the French woman and still more the French child, and neither seemed to feel the need of intelligible parts of speech. The linguists on the lines were the German prisoners, many of whom understood both French and English better than either understood the other. It was part of the French discipline that there should be "no fraternizing with the Boche," but nothing could prevent the Tommy from giving him a cigarette and answering a civil question in a friendly way. The British instinct for shaking hands after the quarrel, especially if the other fellow was down and out, was irrepressible in all the ranks, and out there one heard none of the talk about the "Huns" which was fashionable among non-combatants. But on the French side there was a feeling about the "hereditary enemy" and the "defiler of the soil" which kept this wholesome chivalry in check.

One could not look close without seeing that each nation had the defects of its qualities, but the qualities of both were so extraordinary that it seems churlish to dwell on the defects. The horrors of war are beyond all telling, and those who have witnessed them are bound to see that they are kept in remembrance. Yet with each memory comes also the recollection of the exultation which met the agony, and the unconquerable mind which rose above the confusion. And, above all, of the patient cheerfulness with which the ordinary man faced the everyday emergencies. Perhaps I may quote one passage written at this time :—

> The praise of the British infantryman is on everyone's lips. Nothing too much can be said about his bravery, his endurance, his helpfulness to his pals, his indomitable good humour. Picture after picture of him remains printed in the memory. I see him swinging his legs and chaffing gaily in the lorry going up to the trenches which would be a veritable tumbril to the faint-hearted. I see him marching with the discipline of the old soldier, though he only put on khaki eight months ago, and singing as he goes; I see him shaving before a cracked mirror at the entrance to his dug-out with the shells falling on the hillside close by, and at all odd moments indefatigably brushing, cleaning, washing, polishing, so that he may go smart as a soldier should, in this world of blood and vermin. I see him shattered and bloodstained, waiting on his stretcher for the surgeon, and still smiling. I see him again in his billet behind

the lines, helping the women, petting the children, chaffing the girls, friendly and courteous and irreproachable in his manner. And I see him at all times running to help when the lorry is bogged, or the horse down, or the shells fall.

To be on this scene for even a short time was to get an immense respect for humanity in the mass, and to feel a rising anger at the collective insanity which put it to these uses.

CHAPTER XXII

THE WAR AND THE WOUNDED

After the Battle of the Marne—Breakdown of the Medical Service—A Self-Imposed Mission to France—In Paris—American Help—The Scene at Villeneuve-Triage—A Council of War—A Campaign in London—The Scene in Paris—Myron Herrick and His Task—The First Bomb—Kitchener's Tit-for-Tat—A Mission to Boulogne—The Dardanelles Wounded—Purloining a File—A Comment by Sir Alfred Keogh.

I

I GO back over the ground to tell a story which has not been told before, but which may and, I think, ought to be told now.

A week after the battle of the Marne my wife who, through her convalescent hospital at Tankerton, was in close touch with hospital authorities in London, began to get intimations of a breakdown of the medical service of the Expeditionary Army. I was reluctant to believe them. I had known Sir Alfred Keogh, the previous Director-General of the Royal Army Medical Service, and had witnessed the elaborate care with which he and Haldane had prepared this, as all other parts, of the organization of the Expeditionary Force. It seemed to me more probable that men who had been exposed for the first time to the horrors of war and had suffered nervous shock as well as wounds, had exaggerated the inevitable sufferings of the wounded than that there had been any serious failure of the medical service. At all events, my face was set against flying to publicity on the facts as I knew them.

But the rumours persisted, and my wife said presently that, if I felt unable to act upon them, it was our plain duty to go and see for ourselves. Acting at once on the thought, she went the next morning, while I was at work at the *Westminster*, to both the Foreign Office and the French Embassy, and obtained passports and visas for our departure the following day for Paris. The idea of civilians going on unspecified errands to France was at that moment beyond the ambit of official thought, but somehow she contrived to rush the guard. I should have been helpless without her, and it seemed in the sequel as if her many years of work in the London Hospital and in her own little hospital at Tankerton had found their foreordained purpose.

The route was by Dieppe, and at Victoria Station we met Esher, Dr. Barron, and an old friend, A. H. Fass, who also was going out on a medical errand and had with him a hospital nurse. We had but the vaguest idea what to do when we got to Paris, and when we arrived our task seemed more than ever hopeless. Every exit towards the front was barred; it was impossible to move outside the city boundaries without passes with which we were unprovided. The British Ambassador had gone to Bordeaux and the British Embassy was closed. Even the British Consulate was closed. The sole British representative seemed to be Cardew, the British Chaplain, who was gallantly standing by his flock, many of them poor people who had been unable to get away in the general exodus of foreigners, and who were otherwise without a shepherd. Most of the wealthy French had gone, and thousands of others were clamouring for trains to take them south. Everyone seemed to be listening for the sound of guns, for though the immediate peril had passed with the Battle of the Marne, the Germans were still within forty miles, and no one dared say with any certainty that they would not break through again and crash down upon the city.

Where to go and how to learn anything about the British wounded were bewildering questions to which,for some hours, we saw no answer. Then we remembered a hint that Esher had given us—which was to go to the American Embassy. There we found one of the bravest of men and best of friends to both French and British, Myron Herrick, the Ambassador. The other Governments had instructed their Ambassadors to follow the French Government to Bordeaux, and for some of them, and especially the Allied Ambassadors, there was no choice. Herrick had simply informed his Government that, unless otherwise instructed, he should stay, and he sat absolutely alone in the diplomatic wilderness, bringing help and succour not merely to his own countrymen but to all distressed foreigners. Upon him fell the burden of guarding enemy interests, and of finding money, passports and visas for a rising tide of American, British, and other foreigners streaming into Paris from the various parts of Europe in which they had been stranded. Together with his staff he took everything on, and rapidly improvised an organization which brought order into this chaos, and enabled thousands of hunted people to get back to their homes. With him was his wife, a woman of rare spirit and courage, who also had determined to stay and was now taking the lead in organizing the American Colony to help the sick and wounded.

Herrick made no complaint; the heavier the work, the more patiently and cheerfully he turned to meet it, and when the crowd surged about the Chancellery, his staff seemed always cool and polite and helpful, though many of them were working eighteen hours out of the twenty-four. As emergency work it was beyond praise, but I felt indignant that all this should be put upon them, and got a letter back by the night courier to Grey urging that the British Consulate should be re-opened and a part of the Embassy work resumed in Paris. That, fortunately, was done within a few days. Then we turned to our medical inquiries and found that, with all his other duties, Herrick had been active in this also. We learnt that ever since the Battle of the Marne young Americans had been at work picking up the wounded, including many British, and bringing them back to the hospital at Neuilly which the American Colony had organized and equipped to meet the emergency. The Ambassador himself had been repeatedly over the ground, and in describing his experiences he told us a story which has always remained in my memory. This was of three British soldiers whom he found in a French village, bedraggled, mud-stained, wounded and apparently homeless. He offered to take them back to Paris in his car and promised to look after them, but they refused to move, and he had to go on and leave them. Returning later, he found them still there and begged them again to come with him. Still they refused, but this time they explained. Their

Colonel had been killed and he was buried just there. The Colonel's lady had been very kind to them and they would like to be able to tell her that they had not left him alone in a foreign country. The villagers gave them food and a shakedown at night and, thanking the gentleman for his kindness, they would stay where they were until they were fetched and could report where the Colonel lay, and see that he was properly cared for.

Everything that we heard confirmed what we had learnt in London. There was a shortage of everything—doctors, nurses, ambulances, hospital equipment. Herrick made no criticisms; his advice to us was simply to go and see for ourselves and form our own conclusions. But he made this possible by lending us a car and providing us with passes which enabled us to move freely outside Paris. Proceeding towards the Aisne, we made the clearing-station of Villeneuve-Triage our base for inquiries. By this time it was no longer a question of picking up the wounded on the field, but of bringing the wounded by rail from the front. The first thing that struck us was that there were no hospital trains, or, to be strictly accurate, there was one, but it was out of action in a siding. The wounded were coming down from the Aisne in the *fourgons* which one sees on French railways marked to carry so many horses and so many men (which for ordinary purposes means so many conscript soldiers). In some cases they were slung one on top of the other, and owing to the block on the line, the trains were taking from seventy to eighty hours to do the short distance, some twenty-five miles from the front to Villeneuve-Triage. It was no part of the scheme for dealing with the wounded that they should be detrained at Villeneuve-Triage, or be taken to Paris. The trains were to go via Rouen to the coast, and the wounded to be embarked in hospital ships for England, save a few grave cases which might be taken out at Rouen. Yet after seventy or eighty hours on the road, there was hardly a case which ought not to have been taken out and put in hospital anywhere in France rather than subjected to the torture of the further journey to the coast.

But the trouble was that there was no equipment for dealing with seriously wounded men at Villeneuve-Triage, and no organization for dealing with them in Paris. The small staff at Villeneuve worked heroically with miserably inadequate means at desperate cases, whose one chance was to be taken out and given surgical treatment at once. The splendid MacNab, a London dentist, who was serving as an officer with the London-Scottish Territorials, and was afterwards killed on active service, found himself requisitioned to do major operations, and he was fortunately qualified as a surgeon, though he had had no recent practice. There were, of course, many excellent surgeons in Paris, but there were mountainous obstacles in the way of getting them to Villeneuve in conformity with regulations, and corresponding difficulties in fetching the necessaryequipment. In this situation the Americans again came to the rescue, and improvised an ambulance service to tap the trains and take the worst cases back to hospitals in Paris. Rich men lent their cars and drove them themselves at all hours of the day and night; all available Ford cars were laid hands on and converted to hold stretchers. These were driven and served by American lads who had hastily learnt stretcher drill, and proved most deft and tender in handling the wounded. I went out with these ambulance parties for two nights and saw them at work. I cannot describe what I saw; after fourteen years I can scarcely bear to think of it. In the subsequent three years I saw many terrible things at the front, but none which quite equalled that scene by night when we approached those train-loads of suffering men and took from them the few for whom we had space on our ambulances and whose need seemed to be the greatest.

After three days spent in this way, we held a council of war at the Hotel Westminster, and brought into it the competent medical opinion without which our testimony might have been dismissed as that of mere amateurs acting on an emotional impulse. With this aid we drew up a brief memorandum,* and then on the spot I sat down and wrote a letter to Grey setting out the chief facts as we had observed them. Certain things were clear. The shortage of surgeons, nurses, ambulances, hospital equipment was such as could be made good at once, if it were only known, and there could be no excuse for its continuing, if it was known. Next, if it were not made good, there would be an alarming wastage in the fighting army. The interminable periods spent by the wounded in the horse-boxes and the inevitable results when trains were crowded and doctors were few, and there were no nurses to watch the patients and attend to urgent needs, accounted fully for the gas gangrene and other complications from which large numbers of even the lightly wounded were found to be suffering, when finally they reached hospital. Humanity apart, these things could not go on without rapidly diminishing the fighting strength and putting a large proportion of the wounded finally out of action.

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* The memorandum summarizing our practical proposals which we drew up on this occasion is in my possession and runs as follows:

Draft for immediately necessary scheme of medical reform drawn up after visits to lines of communication, Paris–Marne, October 2nd, 1914.

(1) Abolish the idea that seriously wounded men can be brought to England.
(2) Establish sufficient Base Hospitals with motor ambulances (as far as possible) to bring in the wounded.

But the remedy, as medical opinion agreed, was first of all the establishment of general hospitals and casualty-clearing stations in France, and then the scrapping of the horse-boxes and the substitution for them of regularly equipped ambulance trains, with doctors, nurses and orderlies on board. These might be detained and shunted while the lines were blocked, with the minimum of suffering or injury to the wounded men, but the conditions we had observed would continue so long as the *fourgons* were used. Here, however, there were serious obstacles. The French were greatly opposed to the institution of hospital trains, thinking them an unnecessary extravagance; and though Sir Alfred Keogh, the former Director-General

(3) Lay down the principle that from the moment a man is wounded he passes from the control of the fighting service into that of the medical service. The fighting service to be instructed to give all possible facilities to the medical service, which shall decide the filling and evacuating of the hospitals.

(4) When men are convalescent they shall be sent to Convalescent Homes in England, and when discharged from these they shall pass back to their respective depots.

(5) A supreme authority to supervise the entire medical service in France and at home.

This memorandum would, no doubt, have been drawn up differently if we had known, what we learnt subsequently, that "Casualty Clearing Stations" were part of the organization of the Expeditionary Force, and included in "War Establishments" after the Boer War. These were intended to be expansible units with necessary transport, the last being added in a footnote to "War Establishments," but apparently expunged some time after 1911. The necessity for this organization was proved by experience in South Africa, and had it been utilized from the outset, as intended, the conditions described in this chapter could not have arisen.

of the R.A.M.S., who was then working with the Red Cross at Rouen, obtained a good many sleeping-cars and had them converted for the use of the wounded, most of them were not brought into use till later. We were often told in those days that the French soldier knew and was prepared for the realities of war, and that his British partner must be equally enduring. It seemed to us that this could not be accepted as the last word, and that in any case it was our duty to state the facts as we found them, and insist that a remedy of some sort should be discovered.

So the letter was sent off by the night mail, and my wife and I followed by the first train in the morning. We telegraphed to Haldane *en route* saying that we should come straight to his house, and asking, if possible, that Grey might be there to meet us. Haldane was there, and Grey came in a little later. We told our story, and both decided that it required instant action, which was taken before the day was out. Esher, I believe, had himself sent in a report much to the same effect as ours about the same time. I cannot speak from knowledge of what followed. My wife went to the War Office, and though she was kept in the outer courts, I think she managed to convey that we were in earnest and to get this conveyed to the inner sanctum. I confined myself to saying that, though the last thing I desired was a newspaper sensation, I should, if necessary, tell the whole story in the *Westminster Gazette* and risk whatever penalties from the censorship I might incur in so doing. An eminent commander in the field said that he would not have "civilians yapping at his heels," but inquiry brought confirmation of our reports, and the American witnesses were unanimous. Other members of the Government now lent their aid, and Harcourt, as he told me in later years, put on extreme pressure. Kitchener was not unsympathetic, but he had taken the medical service for granted, and was overwhelmed with the multifarious duties that he had taken upon himself. But he acted with characteristic decision when his mind was made up, and by the end of the week, the former Director-General, Sir Alfred Keogh, who had devised the original scheme of medical service for the Expeditionary Force, was back in his place; and within ten days surgeons, nurses, and fully equipped ambulance parties were pouring into France, and what proved to be the finest and most scientific medical service with which a fighting army was ever equipped was on its way to being established.

The breakdown of a medical service is in certain circumstances so inevitable an incident in war that an onlooker must be wary in passing judgment on it. From what I was told later, I should say that at the beginning the medical authorities simply acted on the current beliefs of their military superiors about the character and duration of the war. They imagined that it would be comparatively short, that the British and French would hold the Germans and, as soon as reinforced, advance. In the meantime the armies would be fighting within a short distance of the coast, and a few hours' journey by rail and sea would bring the greater part of the wounded back to hospitals in England. A few general hospitals at centres like Amiens and Rouen would be necessary for the gravely wounded who might be unable to travel, but for the rest, hospital ships would serve as casualty-clearing stations, and the general hospitals would be in London and the south of England, where the wounded would be near their friends and have the best medical attention. Why, then, go to the trouble and expense of sending a large medical equipment to France and setting up what must be an inferior medical service abroad, when we had a first-class and easily accessible one at home?

Nothing could have been better on paper, and all rational argument seemed to be in its favour. But it was shattered by the realities as they proved to be. The armies broke, the retreat began, the few general hospitals were swept back, the railways were either destroyed or choked with munitions, supplies and reinforcements; and journeys to the coast which the peace time-tables put at two or three hours took anything up a hundred hours. An imaginative realization of the conditions of war before it takes place is apparently one of the things of which human nature is incapable, and if wars continue, we may take it for granted that each generation in turn will find itself struggling with a vast and unforeseen confusion, to which no preparations are adequate. Being on the spot, and seeing the conditions with my own eyes, I felt no disposition to pillory anybody in September, 1914, but our indignation did, I am afraid, boil over when there seemed to be a reluctance to face the facts and take the obviously necessary steps. Here in this country was a complete medical service asking only to be allowed to go, and out there in France was desperate need. It only needed the word and the thing would be done—but the word, we insisted, must be given at once or the public must be told. A month later someone else, no doubt, would have said the same thing, but the continuance for an unnecessary day of what we had witnessed seemed unimaginable.

II

In order to complete this story, something more must be said about the services rendered by the American Colony in Paris in 1914. That Colony was supposed before the war to contain an exceptionally large number of light-hearted and pleasure-loving people, but, if so, it showed rare grit at the critical moment. When the Ambassador decided to stay, a large number of the wealthier Americans who might have departed at any moment decided to stay with him, and, as soon as the question of the wounded became urgent, set to work to provide a hospital of their own. For this purpose they obtained possession of the partially completed buildings of the Lycée Pasteur at Neuilly, and by the third week of September had converted it into a well-equipped hospital. The difficulties were very great, especially the difficulty of obtaining trained nurses, who were practically non-existent in France at that moment. But whatever a willing spirit could do was done. As the wounded came in, men and women worked night and day, the men doing every kind of menial work, the women everything that could be entrusted to the untrained, and under stern necessity a good deal that is usually entrusted only to the trained. Many of the cases were difficult and painful. There was a large number of tetanus cases; and even light wounds were complicated with gas gangrene, as the result of the terrible conditions of transport. The American lads working the ambulances brought their patients here and the surgeons were ready at all hours of the night. Many a British soldier owes his life to the treatment that he received in this hospital, and many others must retain grateful memories of the care and kindness they received there. For a quickly improvised hospital, nothing could have been better. All that money could buy had been provided, and the spirit which accepted every task, however forbidding it might seem, was beyond praise.*

It required real courage to choose this work in preference to the easy escape which was open to the well-to-do neutral, and still more to persist in it as the military situation developed. When Herrick decided to stay, he immediately began to receive urgent warnings, undoubtedly inspired, of the risk he was running. Cables from sources in touch with the Germans intimated that terrible things were in store for Paris, and that there could be no discrimination in favour of the Ambassador or his countrymen and countrywomen. For weeks together the prospect before the people of Paris was that of being drenched with shells and starved into submission. The public parks were crowded with sheep and bullocks, proclaiming only too visibly that the authorities were expecting and preparing for a siege; whispers of unheard-of terrorism falling indiscriminately on men, women and children were in the air. The Germans, I think, had deliberately circulated these rumours, for to break the *moral* of the enemy and cow him into submission was a deliberate part of their military plan, and it led them in those days to welcome and encourage the stories of their own ferocity which afterwards they disclaimed. And, undoubtedly, if Paris had come under their guns or their aircraft, it would have suffered what, according to any standard previous to 1914, would have been unheard-of barbarities.

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* Those who helped in these efforts were many scores, even hundreds, but I should like to record the names of a few. Among the women workers were Mrs. W. K. Vanderbilt, Mrs. George Munro, Mrs. Laurence V. Benét, Miss Florence H. Mathews, Mrs. Henry Payne Whitney, Mrs. Spencer Cosby, Miss Mary Willingale (Chief Nurse), Miss Grace Gassett (Chief of the Surgical Dressing Department). Capt. Frank Mason was Chairman of the Ambulance Committee, and on the same committee were Mr. Laurence V. Benét, Mr. F. W. Monahan, Mr. Robert Bacon and Mr. L. W. Twyeffort. Mr. Laurence V. Benét was Chairman and Commandant of the Transportation Department, and working with him were Dr. Edmund Gros (Ambulance Surgeon), Mr. G. E. Lopp, Mr. A. W. Kipling (Captain of the Ambulances), and Mr. H. Piatt Andrew (Inspector of Ambulances). The Medical Staff included Dr. Winchester Du Bouchet (Surgeon in Chief), Dr. J. A. Blake, Dr. Edmund Gros, Dr. J. P. Hutchinson, and Dr. R. Mignot (Chiefs of the Service), and Mr. G. B. Hayes (Chief Dental Surgeon). Mr. and Mrs. Myron Herrick were active in all departments. After 1914, when the British need had been supplied, the hospital continued its work for French soldiers and expanded to a maximum of 625 beds. Miss Williams, the nurse whom our friend A. H. Fass brought out with him, immediately started work at Neuilly. She was in the early days one of the few trained nurses in this hospital, and remained doing admirable work in it for some years.

In all the subsequent four years I remember nothing quite like the atmosphere in Paris during this time. Seven weeks of terrifying events had exhausted emotions and left a sort of numbness behind. The centre of the city was a desert, and most of the shops were closed. Sitting in the Tuileries Gardens, we found ourselves almost alone in the most crowded hour of the day. We were asked repeatedly if we had provided ourselves with the means of escape if the Germans came back, and were thought extremely rash when we replied that we had not. I was in Paris many times subsequently during the war, and once when Big Bertha was firing at the city and the Germans were again not so far off. But then life was going on as usual; the streets were thronged and the big gun was a jest. In September, 1914, the great fact which weighed on the spirits was that the Government had gone and showed no sign of coming back. What that implied was in everyone's mind. Paris had the sense of being left to her fate, and as yet none of the familiarity with war conditions which afterwards hardened the heart and braced the nerves.

It was on one of these days that the first bomb from aircraft was dropped on the city. It fell, I think, in the Rue Trocadéro on the roadway in front of the Prince of Monaco's house, killing an old man and severely injuring a little child. I was within a few hundred yards of it, and naturally made towards the spot, but the crowd was by that time too dense to get through, and I went on my way to the American Chancellery, where I had an appointment that morning. Herrick, who had followed the same road, had been much nearer the danger point than I had, and while congratulating him on his safety, I could not help saying that the killing of the American Ambassador by an act so plainly contravening the rules of war would have been an event of high importance and great value to the Allies. He grimly agreed, and showed me the draft of an extremely caustic cablegram which he had just dictated for dispatch to his Government. Before many months were over, air-raids upon open towns had become such familiar incidents in the new warfare that it is difficult to recall the emotions which the first of them aroused. If the Germans had reckoned on a moral effect, they were well justified. Paris was shocked and incredulous, but it was not cowed; it was furiously angry. It had seen the aeroplanes coming over, but had thought them to be scouts, and had imagined that the threat to drop bombs was a German bluff which could never be seriously carried out. It was from this point that talk about the "Huns" began.

The return of Sir Alfred Keogh brought all the resources of the medical service to bear on the situation in France, and the splendid system of casualty-clearing stations and general Hospitals, with the greatest of civilian surgeons reinforcing the R.A.M.C., was gradually built up in conformity with trench warfare. But the substitution of a full service of hospital trains for horse-boxes inevitably took some weeks, and in this interval my wife undertook the supply of one of the improvised trains with certain necessaries not immediately obtainable under official regulations. Our house in Sloane Street was the base of this operation, and one room was devoted to the large linen baskets which were filled and refilled and taken out three times a week by a young man of means at his own expense and under considerable difficulties. He had not been accepted for military service owing to ill-health, so he spent the days going backwards and forwards either to Calais or Dieppe, wherever this train was due.

But the need for this voluntary effort rapidly passed, and before the end of the year it could be said with certainty that there was no necessary and no reasonable luxury for the wounded which was not officially supplied. It is due, I think, to the R.A.M.C. to say that the expansion of their service with civilian co-operation was carried through with a remarkable absence of friction or jealousy. I never heard complaints on either side that the one was obstructing or supplanting the other. Medical etiquette is thought to be a stubborn thing, and professional military feeling is certainly not to be trifled with. But the great medical tradition which makes the interest of the patient the first thing carried both along on the same tide and produced only a generous rivalry in the service of the wounded.

III

Before the year was out, Kitchener had a curious little tit-for-tat for what he may have supposed to be my presumptuous interference in these affairs. I met him one night towards the middle of November at a small dinner party at Lord Crewe's house, and the talk strayed on to the question of the wounded and the sentimental attraction which the wake of an army seemed to have for large numbers of unqualified women. He told stories of the scenes in Cape Town during the South African War and of the steps which he had taken to keep order and to enable him to get on with the war. Then he looked across the table at me and said, "Just the same thing is happening in France, and *you* have got to go over there and tell them to go." I thought it was a pleasantry and turned it aside, but he persisted and said, "No, I mean it quite seriously." A week later Sir Alfred Keogh, who was dining at my house, told me that Kitchener had informed him that I was going on this extraordinary errand. Again I protested, but he said seriously that Kitchener meant it, and that I really must fall in. I began to understand what I had heard of Kitchener's peculiar power of compelling people to do all sorts of things which they had no intention of doing. The upshot was that I went to Boulogne at the beginning of January, bearing a missive which had no official authority behind it whatever, and depended only on my word that it was inspired by high authority. This was briefly to the effect that if any ladies who were without professional qualifications, and had no duties officially assigned to them, were in Boulogne after the last day of January, Lord Kitchener would send a destroyer and take them off.

I delivered this to the head of the Red Cross in Boulogne. He happened to be ill and in bed when I arrived, and my message did not console him. He naturally thought it a very unconventional communication, and was not pleased at having put upon him, in addition to his other duties, so delicate and invidious a task as the rounding up of the unqualified English ladies in Boulogne. He said, I have no doubt with justice, that some of the technically unqualified were among the most useful of Red Cross workers. I could do no more than deliver my message, and he fortunately knew me well enough to believe my story. My own embarrassment was increased by the fact that within the next few hours I was warmly greeted and offered generous hospitality by certain of the ladies at whom (I felt sure) this communication was aimed. I was heartily glad to get away from Boulogne towards the front, where, for a period, the English I met were of one sex only.

There was no doubt that the thing needed doing. The accommodation at Boulogne was being filled with people who had no mission there, at the expense of parents and relatives of the gravely wounded; there was danger that the scene of smart society would be shifted to France, and light-hearted people who seemed only faintly to realize the grim realities with which they were surrounded were already drawing invidious comments by their toilets and their entertainments. There was always the plea that men coming down from the front and shortly to go back into that hell needed cheering and entertaining. During the next three years all the capitals of Europe showed the same violent contrast between the glitter on top and the agonies beneath; the desire to get the last thrill out of a life which might be cut short on the morrow and the permanent background of gloom and grief. The sounds of revelry by night seem invariably to be mingled with the noise of guns, and all through the four years one heard them both together.

IV

Five months later I found myself plunged into the questions of the Dardanelles wounded. There was the same sequence of events—my wife reporting the complaints of the medical world, letters from anxious parents and friends pouring in on the editor alleging a serious breakdown, the permitted publicity useless, unless one broke bounds and defied the censor. So one morning I betook myself to Keogh, and said that, however much I might wish to spare him and his Department, I should take all risks and speak out in the W. G. unless he could give me his assurance that everything possible was being done. He said, "You needn't tell me anything, it's all true, and I'm in despair about it. Look at these papers in front of me. That's the file of the Dardanelles wounded, and on top of it is a telegram which ought to be answered this minute. But before it can be answered it has to go first to the Adjutant-General's Department, then to the Army Council, after that from them to the Sea Lords, and from the Sea Lords to the Medical Department of the Admiralty." "And how long will that take?" I asked. "Probably about ten days," was the reply. "Very well then," I said, "if you will look into that corner for a moment, I will purloin the file and the telegram and take it straight across Whitehall to Balfour" (who was then First Lord).

Keogh gasped. Years of official rectitude rose in horror at the thought. It seemed a monstrous joke. Then simultaneously we both seemed to have a vision of something much more monstrous—the wounded on the beach at Gallipoli lying there in the sun under shell fire, while plans for their relief went for ten days round the Whitehall circuit. There was silence for a moment, and then suddenly he said, "I'll do it, you shall take it." For the next half hour we sat down to the file while I made the best précis I could of the chief points (which concerned the breakdown of the dual control of Army and Navy) and then I marched with it across Whitehall. Balfour was not at the Admiralty, but I followed him to Carlton Gardens, and I shall always remember gratefully what followed. For a moment he was pardonably astonished that a journalist should be in possession of a War Office file, but the briefest explanation sufficed, and he said I had done perfectly right. He too, had been in despair at the delays, and was thankful for any chance of acting promptly. But having done so much I must now do more. He agreed with Keogh that the question must be settled, and at once, but still it was necessary to know the view of three Departments in the Admiralty, and since I had got up the case, the quickest way would be for me to go and see the heads of these Departments and then report to him. Armed with his introductions

I spent the whole of the next day in the Admiralty, and came back to him before evening. The decision which needed to be taken was one of special difficulty for the First Lord of the Admiralty, but Balfour took it unflinchingly. I have been told since that the incident was revealed to the Dardanelles Commission, and that the late Field-Marshal Lord Nicholson expressed himself in high language about the impropriety of permitting secret and confidential War Office documents to pass into the hands of an irresponsible civilian. Balfour, I was quite sure, would raise no point of official decorum at such a moment, but I was prepared for an inter-departmental battle and was gratefully surprised by his cool impartiality and determination to reach a decision, however difficult it might be for him personally.

"So you come again with your imperturbable blackmail," said a high official to me on one of these days, when I had gone to him with a suggestion of something wrong, which with a little official activity might be put right. "What you really mean, though you are too damend polite to say it, is that if I don't do what you ask, you will pillory me in your rag." Yes, I suppose I generally did mean that, and it is, I think, the perfectly legitimate attitude of the newspaper editor.

He has before him alternative ways of getting things done. He may make a "stunt" which will incidentally boom his paper and increase its circulation, and finally claim to have compelled the Government or the Minister to act; or he may go to the Minister, tell him that he knows certain things, and will make them public unless action is taken. One or other of these things he must do, and perhaps both in the last resort. The choice is, I suppose, a matter of temperament, and it is not necessarily a virtue to have the temperament which dislikes "stunts." The "stunt" has always to be kept in mind as the last resort, and once or twice in my life I have had cause to regret that I did not adopt it as the first course. But on the whole, I believe the polite blackmail, as my friend called it, is the more fruitful method, measured in results.

V

I am permitted to append a letter from Sir Alfred Keogh, the former Director-General of the Royal Army Medical Service, who has been good enough to read this chapter :—

Villa Orhoitza, St. Jean de Luz, B.P.
December 9th, 1926.

My Dear Spender,—I have read the chapter in which you set forth your early experiences in France in 1914. There is no room for criticism of what you have so temperately described. You will, however, allow me to make a few remarks by way of explanation.

When a breakdown of the "Medical arrangements" in a campaign is notified, it is invariably assumed that this connotes a breakdown of the Medical branch of the Army. This is by no means true. Far from it. The Medical branch of the Army is concerned solely, as regards supplies, with the provision of doctors, nurses, drugs, instruments, and dressings, in addition to the N.C.O.'s and men of the Royal Army Medical Corps, of the various medical units.

It is reasonable enough that the public should consider that all those things which go to the making of the "Medical arrangements" rest with the Medical Authorities of the Army and it is equally reasonable that, ignorant of the real state of affairs, blame should be laid at their door when these fail. For it is assumed that that subsists which should subsist.

The case of the sick and wounded in war and all that portends involves a whole mass of things other than those for which the Medical branch is responsible and of which I have spoken. The provision and equipment of buildings, the supply of tents, sheets, blankets, pillows, bedsteads *et hoc genus omne,* all things which minister in so important a degree to the due care of the casualties in war, belong to branches other than the Medical.

If, when the Medical arrangements are known to have been inadequate to requirements, it can be shown that demands were not made upon the departments concerned for such important supplies, the Medical branch may be held responsible. But it should ever be remembered that the Medical Authorities do not "hold" these as they "hold" dressings, drugs, etc.; they are not responsible for the promptness nor the adequacy of supply.

Herein lies the *raison d'être* of the Red Cross Society. But I need not pursue the subject further.—Yours sincerely, Alfred Keogh.

CHAPTER XXIII

A WAR HOSPITAL

The Tankerton Hospital—In the Military Zone—Belgian Wounded—A First Line Hospital—Three Hundred Beds—Responsibilities and Difficulties—Some Memories—A Child Patient—Walter Scott and a Deathbed—The Aftermath—From War to Peace.

I

WHEN the war came, the little hospital at Tankerton, of which something has been said in another chapter,* found itself in a military zone in which all institutions likely to be serviceable were at the disposal of the Admiralty. It had been working for nearly sixteen years, during which, between two and three thousand men and boys had passed through it, but that part of its work had now to be wound up. At the beginning of August, 1914, my wife was told to evacuate the civil patients and hold herself ready to take naval wounded. None came, and it soon became probable that none would come. The sea took its toll, but very few naval wounded came back to hospital. But in a few weeks beds were urgently needed for Belgian sick and wounded, and in addition to the hospital a large entertainment room was taken and converted into a ward for their accommodation. Most of them were light cases, and the stress of this work was over by the beginning of 1915, but by that time the need for beds for the British Army was constantly increasing, and early in the year both the old and new buildings were accepted as a first line hospital by the R.A.M.S., who left my wife in charge as Commandant, and told her to carry on and increase the number of beds as quickly as possible.

So gradually the little hospital with its sixteen beds was expanded by the addition of huts and houses until it had finally 300 beds and was the largest private hospital in the country. Since it was a first line, and not a Voluntary Aid hospital, operating theatre, X-ray department and full surgical equipment had to be provided, and the staff enlarged by resident surgeons and a large number of fully qualified nurses. Undoubtedly it was a very serious responsibility. During 1917 and 1918 there were 500 persons to be catered for every day, and the food-rationing system caused constant emergencies. Several times my wife telephoned to me in London to say that in a few hours they would be absolutely out of meat, or some other essential commodity, which sent me rushing to the Food Controller, who was not always as responsive as I desired. I remember an official expressing the opinion that it would do the soldiers no harm if they had to subsist on farinaceous food for twenty-four hours or so, and my warm invitation to him to come down and administer that diet to our 300 patients. My wife made it a rule never to say no to any demand made on her, but her resources were sometimes taxed to their limits, as, for instance, when a demand came to have eighty extra beds ready at twelve hours' notice. It was done somehow, but looking back on it, I can't think how. Money was always an anxiety, for the War Office grant left a large balance to be made up, but many old friends contributed generously, and Lady Crewe in London organized a matinée at which the Queen, who had helped much by her kindly interest, was present.

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* Vol. I, pp. 98–99

I spent most Saturday afternoons and Sundays at Tankerton during the four years of the war, and my wife visited me on one day in the week in London. Air-raids were a constant anxiety, for nearly all of them passed over or very near the hospital on their way to London, and were engaged by anti-aircraft guns, some of which were within half a mile or less. The perfect discipline with which hospital staffs went on with their work through the din and racket on these occasions proved the nerve and courage of women, but the effect on wounded men was bad, and lying helpless in bed with nerves on edge with suffering, some of them felt acutely what they would have taken as an everyday incident in the trenches. I could never get out of my mind the possibility of a bomb having fallen in a ward at Tankerton, and at the end of every raid I rushed to the telephone for reassurance. There was, at one time, serious thought of evacuating these hospitals on the coast, but when the proposal was examined, it was seen at once that the same reasoning would have barred all London hospitals and a great many others in the south of England. Since it was totally impossible to replace these with new accommodation in the sheltered areas, the word went out to all to carry on. But since Tankerton was on one of the stretches of coast on which invasion was thought possible, the Commandant had to be supplied with secret instructions for evacuation in case of need, and that possibility was one which could never be quite ignored.

The surgeons were always being snatched away, and often at moments when the need for them was most urgent, and to replace them was most difficult. The Medical Committees which arranged these things were adamant that the younger men should go to the front, whatever they might be doing at home. It was a sound enough rule, if the need was greater abroad, but it very often was not, and then it seemed a mere stupidity. Thus our principal surgeon, Dr. Witney, who was doing twelve major operations a week, was suddenly whisked away to Egypt, and we had the greatest difficulty in finding a successor to him at short notice. He had very important work later, but after four months in Egypt he wrote to me that his most serious case till then had been an inflamed mosquito bite. Tankerton was saved in this emergency by a most admirable American surgeon, Dr. Bell, who had come over early in the war with a determination to play his part, whatever his countrymen might do. Later, my wife came to rely largely on Canadian help. Colonel Reason, of London, Ontario—a man of the highest skill and competence, who later was commanding officer of the great General Hospital at Doullens in France—was then one of the principal medical officers of the Shorncliffe District, to which Tankerton was attached. He and the officers under him rendered unfailing help in all emergencies.

The hospital was extremely fortunate in its staff—especially the Matron, Miss Daisy Elliot, who was rightly awarded high distinctions. The Church Army also was indefatigable in its help, and converted its seaside home for girls into a ward for men recovering, thus releasing beds for graver cases. Then close at hand was Colonel Greg, in charge of the Cheshire Territorials, who were in training on the coast. He was always a warm friend and ready helper.

II

Memories of these times crowd in upon me. I can still see the long convoys coming down the coast road with their lights darkened, and the stretcher-bearers unloading the ambulances by the dim light of their electric torches. I can see buildings long demolished, and know where one man died and another fought back to life, and many faces come back to me. The suffering will not bear thinking of—ghastly wounds, terrible operations, dressings which it took all one's courage to witness; but through it all the happier memory of patience, cheerfulness and unselfishness is the more abiding. It is sometimes thought that doctors and nurses in hospitals grow hardened to pain and death. It is seldom so, according to my observation, and certainly was not so in this hospital. The number of deaths, in proportion to the serious cases, was very small, but every death seemed to be regarded as a defeat by the staff, and doctors and nurses struggled to the last to avoid maiming operations. I could only be an occasional witness, but almost every night I had bulletins of the danger-list from my wife over the telephone. She knew every man in the hospital and had the useful knack of remembering all their names.

I am speaking of what was common as the commonplace only ten years ago, and the thousands who served in war hospitals have similar memories. Let me record only two of the many incidents that have lodged in my memory.

A little boy of about five years of age was run over by a car and seriously injured on the road in front of the hospital. Since there was no civilian hospital within seven miles, he was brought in and the surgeons found that an immediate operation was necessary. Then the questions arose what to do with him. There was not at that moment a vacant bed in the whole hospital, and moreover there was this difficulty, that silence and darkness were essential. We were all discussing what to do, when Sergeant-Major White, acting orderly, whose wound was nearly healed, said, "Let him have my bed." There were objections, but he pressed hard and finally put the child in his own bed and insisted that he should be allowed to keep watch—which he did, lying on a mattress beside him all night. But there were twelve other men in the ward, and how could there be silence and darkness? "Leave it to us," was the answer, and for three successive days and nights there was hardly a light or a word or whisper in that ward, and all twelve lay in silence and darkness. As the story got about, other wards earnestly begged to be allowed to take a spell, but the Sergeant-Major and his ward absolutely refused to part with their patient, and with great pride they nursed him back to life, and then finally, when he was able to move about, showed him to the other wards. He was a sweet child, and while he lay between life and death, the war and their own wounds seemed to vanish, and day and night there was only one question, "Would they pull him through?"

For six months a frail lad from the north lay dying with a shot in his spine. There were flickers of hope, but for all the efforts to pull him back, he went gradually downhill. I see him now with his fair hair and blue eyes, lying in one position week after week, so uncomplaining, so anxious lest he should be giving trouble. His one resource was to read or be read to, and in these weeks he discovered Walter Scott. Towards the end, when he had grown too weak to read himself, the nurses read to him, and on the last day they were reading "Ivanhoe." His parents had come and were sitting by his bed, and presently the padre came in and said prayers, and through it all the lad was gentle and affectionate and attentive. Then he looked up and said to the nurse, "Please read on, I do so want to know the end before I go." And so she went on reading—just about where Athelstane returned from the grave—and slowly, as she read, he passed into unconsciousness.

Surely Walter Scott was at that deathbed and told him the end when he had passed to the other side.

These men came from all classes, and a large number were of the labouring class. After seeing them for four years in all the stress of this time—in the trenches and in the hospitals, facing unimaginable pain, dying without a murmur—I have never been able to listen without anger to those who prate about "inferior" and "superior" stocks. The "inferior" had incredible virtues which put many "superiors" to shame. My wife was told at the beginning that one woman alone, acting as commandant without a male committee or a military officer at hand to appeal to, would find it an impossible task to keep order among 300 wounded soldiers. She was specially warned that Australian and Canadian wounded required a peculiar kind of discipline which only their own people knew how to apply, and could not be safely taken in a British private hospital. There were, of course, occasional difficulties; the Australians who were angels in bed were apt to get the devil into them for the first day or two after they got up. But in the whole period there were only three crime-sheets among the 5,000 men who passed through this hospital, and there was no trouble which after a very little did not yield to friendly remonstrance. My wife pleaded all the time for more and not less liberty for wounded men, and she obtained it for other hospitals besides her own. Punctuality at meals and closing time was enforced, but the men were not otherwise kept within bounds. For the most part they saw to discipline themselves and developed a strong public opinion against lowering the credit of the hospital or the "men in blue" in the town.

When the war ended, most of the private hospitals closed down, but there came a strong appeal from the Medical Department of the War Office to keep the Tankerton hospital open and provide 100 beds for the lingering or incurable cases of which unhappily there were scores of thousands still in the country. I own I was very doubtful. The strain on my wife had been very great—for in addition to the Tankerton hospital she had had serious responsibilities in the convalescent camps—and finance was always an anxiety. Claims on winding up began to flow in, and one at least had to be resisted, at the cost of long and tiresome litigation. Still, the need was so evident that the old rule of not saying no prevailed, and for two and a half years longer the Tankerton hospital remained open for chronic cases. The only stipulation was that no case should be labelled "incurable." Many, of course, were, and there was nothing to be done for them except ease their last days but the effort to save the apparently doomed was the driving force in these years, and many all but miraculous cures relieved what would otherwise have been the gloom of this work.

At the end of two and a half years the aggregate number of these patients was sadly declining and the need of private accommodation had passed. In the meantime the leases of the necessary buildings had expired, and my wife was holding on precariously under the Rent Restriction Act, which was of very doubtful application to hospitals. She found in the end that she could not renew the lease even of the one house which had served for the fifteen-bed hospital before the war. So there was nothing to do but to wind up and depart, leaving for memory of the War Hospital only the corner of the churchyard which holds its dead. On winding up we were left with almost exactly the sum at which the assets of the old hospital were valued, and there was unanimous agreement among the subscribers that it should not be divided, but applied to a new purpose. With it was built the "Hop-pickers' Hospital," which stands on our meadow at Marden, in Kent, and is the centre of a chain of medical huts in the adjoining hop-gardens. There are an in-patient ward with ten beds, which are always occupied in the picking season, and an out-patient department through which, and the adjoining huts, some four thousand patients pass every year. For four or five weeks a lady doctor and twelve trained nurses are kept actively at work ministering to the very poor people who come into our district every autumn. Here, also, there are serious casualties, and one of the war ambulances of the old hospital is still busily at work during the autumn weeks in the lanes and hop-gardens of Kent.

My part in these affairs, though an unfailing interest and pleasure, has been only the minor and subsidiary one. Yet I count it to have been of very real value to me, for through my wife and her work I have been kept in touch with the concrete human case which the politician, with his absorption in "isms" and abstractions and the mechanics of party politics, is apt to lose sight of.

CHAPTER XXIV

KITCHENER AND FISHER

A First Meeting with Kitchener—An Inquiry about Newspapers—Kitchener in Egypt—An Incident in 1914—Friction with Politicians—Kitchener and Asquith—"Jackie" Fisher and the Press—The "Picnic at Kiel"—In a Submarine at Portsmouth—Fisher and Churchill—A Painful Interview—A Last Meeting.

I

TWO dominating personalities remain linked in my memory of these times—Kitchener and Fisher. Much has been written about both of them, but there may still be room for a few personal impressions.

First Kitchener, who was in some ways the most puzzling figure of this time. From my boyhood upwards I had heard him discussed in the household of an uncle who was related to the Kitchener family, and the unexpected twists in the career of the then unknown young soldier were a frequent subject of conversation in this circle. I thus got a mental image of him long before I saw him, and was always in difficulty about adjusting it to the Kitchener of later years. I saw him first in June, 1899, and very clearly remember the occasion. I had bicycled down from London to the Durdans to spend an hour or two with Lord Rosebery, expecting to find him alone. Rosebery came out into the hall to meet me and said, "Kitchener is here, and he'll eat you alive if he knows who you are." The allusion was to the controversy about the Mahdi's head, which had been raised by the *Westminster* correspondent in the Omdurman campaign, and was still being debated in the House of Commons. I said I would risk it, and we passed out on to the lawn where he was sitting. I was introduced with a chaffing reference to my iniquities. This entirely missed fire. Kitchener knew nothing about me or my paper or my war correspondent, but he presently asked me certain questions about the London newspapers, and wanted to know whether the *Daily News* was a Liberal or Conservative paper. Alarms for my safety were evidently unnecessary. No one could have been more affable, or more entirely absorbed in his own affairs. He talked, so far as I remember, about one thing, and one thing only, "the coming South African War," and just brushed me aside when I said I hoped it was far from certain. It was, in his view, quite certain, and there was nothing to be done now but to prepare a plan of campaign. Then he developed his plan, a plan on the model of his Egyptian campaign, with railways for its pivots and railways swiftly run out to meet all the emergencies of warfare. Rosebery objected that the South African terrain was not quite the same thing as the Egyptian desert, but he insisted that in all essentials it was, and that in both alike the railway was the key. It was perfectly clear that he both hoped and expected to have the conduct of the coming war. I remember being struck by the extreme frankness of this talk in the presence of a chance comer whom he was seeing for the first time. But the notion that Kitchener was a secretive or silent man was, so far as my experience goes, always unfounded. He talked copiously, and with the utmost freedom and frankness. Nor was he by any means the misogynist that legend represented him to be. My wife met him for the first time on board the Admiralty yacht *Enchantress* at the Coronation Naval Review in 1911, and as soon as she was introduced to him, he launched out into intimate talk about himself and his life, and his ideas of politics at home and in India. This talk went on before lunch, during it, and well into the afternoon; and he seemed, as she told me at the time, to be a very simple and friendly man.

In later years Kitchener's most cherished ambition was to be Viceroy of India, and he made no effort to conceal his disappointment when Morley and the Liberal Government refused to give him the place. I rather think that, left to himself, Morley would have given it him, but there were strong and solid reasons against promoting a Commander-in-Chief to be Viceroy at that moment, and these were too loudly expressed to be ignored. Kitchener said that everything was over and that nothing now remained but to purchase a plot in some convenient cemetery. But he was greatly consoled by being appointed to Egypt, and during the three years that he was there, he certainly succeeded in arresting the Nationalist movement. As the victor of Omdurman, he brought great prestige to the position, but he had also a real insight into the Oriental mind, which enabled him to brush aside politics and deal with the Egyptians on their own terms. Like Cromer before him, he had the great gift of creating a legend about himself, and he made the Egyptians believe that he was both benevolent and dangerous, as clever as themselves and a great deal more powerful. The orders he issued were never questioned, though some of them might be hard to fulfil. When I was in Egypt as a member of the Milner Mission, in 1920, the headman of an Egyptian village pointed out to me a large and festering pond which Kitchener—always with an eye to sanitation—had ordered to be filled up. I asked why it had not been done, and the answer was that it was more than forty feet deep. I asked again, "didn't they tell Lord Kitchener and suggest something else—deodorize the pond, drain it off?" Oh no, when Lord Kitchener had given an order, nobody ever argued with him. What then happened? Why, all the winter the villagers brought stones and rubbish and threw them into the pond, which was now only thirty-five feet deep. The work, said my informant, was very popular, for it was well paid and did no harm to anyone. Anyhow, Lord Kitchener was a great man, and his death a sore blow to Egypt.

He would gladly have gone back to Egypt, if he had survived the war, and was keenly anxious that his place should not be permanently filled. I do not think he would have felt any sense of grievance, if the Government had allowed him to complete the return journey which was so dramatically stopped on August 3rd, 1914. About that, many stories have been told, and without challenging any of them, I may, perhaps, be allowed to add one of my own. The news that he was timed to depart on the morning of August 3rd caused consternation in Fleet Street, which on that point had rightly interpreted popular opinion. I reached the *Westminster* office as usual about half-past eight that morning, and soon after ten my telephone bell began to ring. The first call was from my wife, who happened to be taking a journey to the coast, and she rang me up to say that she had seen Kitchener in the act of departing from Victoria Station. One after another different voices repeated the same tale—that Kitchener was going, that he must be stopped, and that the Government must be made to stop him. Whether the thing was concerted I don't know, but the voices were those of brother editors (of morning papers) saying in unison that if by evening it was found that Kitchener was gone, there would to-morrow be such an uproar against the Government as had not been known in our time. I was begged to convey this to the proper quarter at once, and to back it up with the strongest remonstrance in the W. G.

I was (and am) convinced that it would have been a sad blunder to let Kitchener depart at this moment, and I thought a little pressure might avoid a very undesirable agitation, so I sat down at once and wrote a letter to McKenna telling him exactly what had happened, and asked him to pass it on to the Prime Minister, if he thought fit. This I got sent into the Cabinet, which by that time was already sitting. What effect it had, if any, I do not know. Probably it was a superfluous communication, for Asquith has since told us that his mind was already made up to recall Kitchener and make him Secretary for War. Kitchener, at all events, was on his way back (as the evening papers announced) before the afternoon was over.

II

It was one thing to use Kitchener's services and quite another to make him Secretary for War, and I doubt very much whether this appointment would have been made but for the extraordinary agitation which was then rising against Haldane. In his very just estimate of Kitchener, Grey has spoken frankly about the disadvantages of this appointment from the point of view of the Cabinet. Briefly, it prevented the Cabinet from getting the military view in the clear-cut and decisive way in which it ought to have been presented, and would have been presented if Kitchener had been Chief of the Staff instead of Secretary for War. There was, to all intents and purposes, no General Staff at the beginning of the war. The eminent soldiers who had composed the Staff, as Haldane designed it, went to the front when the war broke out, and those who remained had no authority apart from Kitchener. He, in the meantime, endeavoured to fill all the rôles and to be at one and the same time Cabinet Minister, strategical adviser and general organizer of the campaign. This confused the boundaries and threw on Kitchener a load of detail which left him no leisure for thought. Commanders in the field looked askance at this doubling of the parts, and French loudly complained when he appeared in uniform on the occasion of their famous interview during the retreat from Mons. Ministers, on the other hand, complained that they were never certain what exactly the military view was, for Kitchener held strong opinions about what civilians ought to be told, and his expositions, though fluent and picturesque, often seemed misty and inconsistent, when analysed by the cool civilian intelligence. In his own view he was always the expert explaining military mysteries to amateurs; and in the position which he occupied, there was no appeal against his judgment.

Friction was inevitable in the circumstances, and it continued and developed until in the following year the General Staff was reconstituted and Sir William Robertson made Chief of it. Had anyone but Asquith been Prime Minister, Kitchener would almost certainly have resigned before the year was out. Kitchener's trust in Asquith, and his belief that in Asquith he had found solid rock amid shifting sands, was the one thing that kept him going, and nothing could have been more admirable than the relations of the two men. Here Asquith's patience and absolute straightforwardness had their just reward. But Kitchener, sitting in London and wrestling with the Cabinet, was in a new world which he did not understand and which greatly depressed his spirits. He felt none of the zest of the fighting soldier, and knew far too much to share the optimism with which uninformed civilians buoyed themselves up when things went visibly wrong. I remember a talk with him in December, 1914, when he painted the situation in black colours and earnestly impressed on me that cheerfulness ought not to be encouraged. His parting words were, "Oh, how I wish I could go to bed to-night and not wake up till it's all over!"

I saw him only in these vivid glimpses, and never went to the War Office or sought for any talk with him on the subject of the war. It seemed to me that his aloofness from the Press was a valuable part of his public character which ought to be respected by journalists. But I knew FitzGerald, his military secretary and confidant, a man greatly beloved and respected, who afterwards went down with his Chief in the *Hampshire*. And now and again, as I was leaving my office in the afternoon, I got a telephone message from FitzGerald asking me to call on him at St. James's Palace on my way home. Nearly always it was the same tale—some tangle between Kitchener and the politicians in which the latter seemed to have behaved very incomprehensibly, if not downright wickedly. Kitchener could not and never would understand these strange animals, the politicians. They were inquisitive and meddling, and wanted to know things which no soldier with any military instinct could be expected to communicate to twenty-three other people with whom he was not intimately acquainted.

Having heard something of the other side, I ventured to give a little advice. Let Kitchener tell the twenty-three straight out that there were certain things which could not be communicated even to the Cabinet and still less printed in Cabinet papers, and I was sure they would accept it. But what he must not do was to evade and parry their questions, give them figures and estimates which, though technically accurate, really concealed the truth, for in that case the Civil Departments which built up their operations on War Office assurances must break down and confusion and recrimination follow. The truth was that Kitchener, while complaining of politicians, was himself too much of a politician. He prided himself, as soldiers will, not on his bluntness, but on his skill, and thought of himself as engaging the politicians on their own terms and being their equal, and even their superior, in political devices. In this respect there was some thing Oriental about him, and he often failed to distinguish between East and West.

All this explains why the inside estimate of Kitchener never in these months rose to the outside estimate of him. But the outside estimate was, I believe, profoundly right. Kitchener had qualities which are best judged from a distance, and they were not the less valuable because attended with their defects. He was extraordinarily right when other people were wrong. From the beginning he had the right measure of the war, and his insistence on "three years" and "three million men," when most other experts were talking of six months and the improbability of even a million being engaged, was of enormous value. He was also right—righter even than some of the leading French strategists—in his insistence during the last week of July that the Germans were coming through Belgium and that the British should not be placed in a position in which they would inevitably be outflanked. He was right again, when Lord French was wrong, in the instant measures that he took to repair the situation after the retreat from Mons and to bring the British Expeditionary Force into co-operation with the French. And when it came to recruiting on the large scale, the Kitchener appeal, the Kitchener estimate of the need, the belief that what Kitchener said was true had overwhelming power. To some of us at the time his disregard of the Territorial Army—which was sheer ignorance inspired by ancient prejudices at the War Office—was exasperating, and I believe still that if he had made this army the basis of his expansion he would have saved himself an infinity of trouble and largely avoided the shortage of men which was so painfully felt in the following year. But this does not affect the immense service that he rendered as the rallying point of the national effort, and it was a service that no one else could have rendered. Let those who speak of the "Kitchener legend" remember that the creation of such a legend is the surest proof of genius in personality.

III

But of all this past generation of fighting men, Fisher leaves the vividest impression—"Jackie" Fisher of beloved memory. He, too, thought himself the most accomplished of them all, but he was in reality the simplest and most transparent of men. Unlike Kitchener, he cultivated the Press unblushingly, from the loftiest and most patriotic of motives. We were to be instructed in the true blue-water doctrine, in the greatness and inevitability of the Dreadnought, in the essential necessity for the British Empire of holding all the narrows of the seven seas, and sundry other articles in the ever-expanding creed of the scientific seaman. But he took such pains with each of us, was so intimate and affectionate, that we never could resist the notion that we were the chosen repositories of his special confidence. He gave with both hands to each in turn, and we rewarded him with such an advertisement of himself and his ideas as no seaman ever received from newspapers, and probably none ever will again.

I have a collection of his letters, most of them marked "Secret," and nearly all voluminous and exuberant. He wrote to me, he wrote to my wife, and he wrote about everything. One letter (to my wife) was a high appreciation of a gown in which she had appeared at Court; another enlarged on the infallible nature of a certain remedy for a cold (sent by an Admiralty messenger); another was about the lost tribes and their rediscovery in the British Isles—a subject on which one never could be quite sure whether he was in earnest or jesting. His spirits were unquenchable; when we asked him to dinner, it was as likely as not that he would come into the room dancing a hornpipe, and there seemed to be no company in which he was not absolutely at home. In all this he was absolutely unaffected and simple, without a trace of pose or affectation.

My first meeting with him, somewhere about the year 1903, is vividly impressed on my mind. He had never seen me till that moment, but he plunged at once into an account of a dinner at which he had met the King in the previous week. He had said to the King: "We'll have a picnic at Kiel. We'll just go along and put two British ships one each side of a German; and then we'll say to the German, as the policeman says to the drunk, 'Come along quietly and there'll be no trouble, but if you don't, then there'll be trouble, and no mistake about it.' " "And what," I asked, "did the King say to that?" Fisher looked at me quizzically for a moment, and then burst out laughing. "The King said, 'My God, Fisher, you must be mad!'"

Rumours of these conversational exploits went round the European whispering gallery, and no doubt added to the wrath in Berlin. But no one who knew Fisher and saw the tongue in his cheek could have taken him seriously. His talk, like his writing, was a deliberate extravaganza to illustrate a serious point. He was full of scripture, as sailors are, and would remark blandly that the prophets always exaggerated. I think he really believed that the Dreadnought, which by a master-stroke made all other types obsolete, would end the naval competition by making it hopeless for other nations to pick up the British lead, and was seriously disappointed when that result did not follow. But after the first disillusionment he was always genuinely alarmed about the margin of safety, and if he contemplated war, it was at some perpetually receding date, when another master-stroke should have placed the British fleet on an unassailable peak.

Memories crowd back on me of days with him at Kelvinstone, his charming little country house in Norfolk, at Osborne looking at his new scheme of training for naval cadets, and on board the Admiralty yacht at Portsmouth. On one of the latter occasions he brought a submarine alongside and invited us to go down in her if we dared. It was in the early days of submarines, and this was one of the "C" type, of gallant and disastrous memory. He stood on the deck of the yacht and gave us a short lecture on her qualities with this for peroration: "I shouldn't dream of going down in her myself, and I absolutely forbid Percy Scott (who was standing next to him) to go. We are far too valuable to the Navy for us to risk our lives, but if any of you civilian gentlemen like to go, that's your business, and if you don't come up again, mind I'm not to be held responsible." There were four of us, and one of our number remembered that he was going to be married in a month's time, and said with some show of reason that it was his absolute duty not to put his fiancée in the painful position which our host seemed to contemplate. The remaining three—Winston Churchill was one—felt under an absolute compulsion to risk it, and presently we were fitted into the box of tricks which was then the interior of a submarine, and heard the hatches closed down on us. The absolute silence and stillness of the undersea world was what most impressed me, and for half an hour I sat watching a white mouse in a cage with the assurance that, if it seemed well, I need have no anxiety about the supply of oxygen—the failure of which had never occurred to me. When we finally emerged and had climbed upon deck, the first thing we saw was the yacht's pinnace with Fisher on board. Ten minutes after we had submerged he had ordered her out, and since then had been cruising up and down in a high state of anxiety, for, as he explained to me, these were tricky waters for submarines, and it would have been an extremely unpleasant incident for him if Winston had ended his days on the mud at the bottom of Portsmouth harbour.

I was with him on another occasion watching some manœuvres on the same spot. Suddenly a submarine dived under a battle-ship, and a horrified exclamation rose up from the staff that there was not water enough for her to do it. Fisher was greatly agitated. He swore and he prayed, and said in the same breath that the young gentleman commanding the submarine was a glorious lad and that he deserved to be shot. After three awful minutes we saw the conning-tower reappear, whereupon Fisher beckoned to a member of the staff and said to him in a loud voice, "Find out the name of that officer and see that he is severely reprimanded for that damned tomfoolery." When the messenger had departed, he beckoned to another, and said, "When they've done scolding him, bring the young gentleman to my cabin and tell the steward to send up a bottle of the best champagne and two glasses."

I saw him constantly during the agitations about Naval Estimates which were a perennial trouble with the Liberal Government. They began with Tweedmouth's Estimates in 1908, reached their climax in the fight over the eight Dreadnoughts the following year, and, after simmering for the next four years, were bitterly renewed over Churchill's Estimates in 1914. Really the surprising thing was not that the Estimates mounted up, but that the change to the Dreadnought type was effected with so little expense to the country. But Fisher, though unappeasable about his new types, was a real economist in all else. He found a large part of the money by a ruthless scrapping of the types he thought obsolete, and was greatly helped in his battles with the politicians by his manifest efficiency in this respect. Whenever he wanted more money, the Admiralty rang with his cries of "Sack the lot" and "Scrap the lot," and everybody said he was a wonderful economist.

There was one incident connected with the last of those fights over Estimates which Fisher used to relate as the supreme instance of the Providence which keeps guard over the British Empire. In the battle between Churchill and his opponents in January, 1914, it was decided, as a concession to the economists, to strike out the usual Naval Manœuvres and to substitute for them a less expensive trial mobilization. Thus, when the critical days of July came, the fleet was concentrated and mobilized instead of being scattered, as it almost certainly would have been, if the ordinary Naval Manœuvre programme had been carried out. The enormous advantage of this has been stressed by every historian of the war, and the popular interpretation of it in Germany was that we deliberately planned it with knowledge and intention. It was, in fact, nothing but an accident of the controversy between the Admiralty and the economists at the beginning of the year.

After the war had broken out I was a frequent visitor to Fisher's room at the Admiralty, and occasionally he let me share the thrills of the eternal wireless vigil kept in Whitehall. For Churchill personally he never had anything but loyal and friendly words, but the contention between them about the Dardanelles was painful to watch. "I am sure I am right. I am sure I am right," he kept repeating, "but *he* is always convincing me against my will. I hear him talk and he seems to make the difficulties vanish, and when he is gone I sit down and write him a letter and say I agree. Then I go back to bed and can't sleep, and his talk passes away, and I know I am right. So I get up and write him another letter and say I don't agree, and so it goes on." Fisher was not quite the unsophisticated seaman in the hands of the dialectician that this narrative might suggest. He had wiles of his own which on his best days made him the equal of any politician that ever lived. But Churchill's wiles and his were on different planes and

Churchill dazed and dazzled him and produced a mental confusion which he was painfully aware of, but unable to clear up.

During these weeks he seemed to me to be breaking under the strain. He made the mistake of throwing up alternative plans which were open to all the objections that he was raising against the Dardanelles scheme, and which were easily riddled by his own arguments. He had said and written so many contradictory things that he could not complain if his consent was claimed. He was, in fact, not a naval strategist, but a great constructive and engineering sort of man whose work was done when he had provided the great fleet. As between him and Churchill things went rapidly downhill from the beginning of 1915, until one day he absented himself as a protest against no one knew quite what. It was a very critical moment, and there was even some ground for thinking that the German fleet was coming out. The next day when he was still absent, I saw the Prime Minister, and he said that as an old friend of Fisher's, I might go over to his house in Admiralty Arch, tell him that Churchill was going, that Balfour was to be First Lord in the New Coalition Government, and see what could be done. I went and spent an hour with him, one of the most painful hours in my life. All his pent-up bitterness and accumulated grievances against politicians came pouring out, and I knew that my mission was hopeless. I was to go back and say that nothing would induce him to return.

He was far too spirited and patriotic to remain long in this mood, and he quickly picked himself up and offered his services in any capacity in which the Government might think him useful. A Department was provided for him, and in that he worked cheerfully till the end of the war. But he never asked me to see him again, and I heard incidentally that he had resented something I had said in the interview at Admiralty Arch. Happily we had one last meeting. Landing perilously one day on a shelter in the middle of Piccadilly, I almost fell into his arms, and received at once the old affectionate greeting. Then amid the traffic we stood talking for a full quarter of an hour, and I can see now his gay figure and jovial wave of the hand as he went his way. That was the last time I saw him, and a few weeks later he was dead.

CHAPTER XXV

1916 AND AFTER

Asquith and his Opponents—1917—Visits to France—The Paaschendaele Offensive and the Reasons for It—A Journalist in Difficulties—Easterners and Westerners—The Maurice Debate and Its Consequences—A Talk with Clemenceau—American Officers in Paris—A "Little Packet" from Morley—The 1918 Election—Meeting President Wilson—The State Banquet—The Peace Conference—The Wee Frees—Life in the Country—A Busy Retirement.

I

DURING the war the censorship and the cessation of ordinary politics drove the newspapers off their normal work of criticism, but left them with an inordinate power over the fortunes of individuals. In ordinary times the attack on men like Haldane and Asquith would have rallied their parties to their defence; in war, with parties out of action, it fell on them as individuals left solitary in a world which was hunting for scapegoats. Asquith never could be got to see that his peace-time method of silence and magnanimity and leaving-the-country-to-judge would not avail him in war, and in spite of many urgings he would neither meet his Press critics and conciliate them nor reply to them in public. Everyone in the world, certainly everyone in Fleet Street, seemed to know what was on foot in the autumn and winter of 1916, but it was useless to take warnings to Downing Street. Asquith was still persuaded that all his geese were swans, and all his colleagues loyal, and that anything which appeared to suggest the contrary was either a heated imagination or the malicious gossip of Fleet Street. I lunched at No. 10 very shortly before the crisis was sprung upon him. Lloyd George was one of the guests, and on Asquith's side there seemed to be not the faintest suspicion of what was coming, though scarcely anything else at that moment was in my own mind. It was equally characteristic of him that, when the blow fell, he had none of the reactions of the innocent-deceived. He took it as philosophically as everything else and uttered no cry of pain or surprise. But two things, I think, he did feel deeply, the defection of Labour and Balfour's adhesion to his opponents. Against both of these things he had thought himself secure.

The year 1917 was a deep disappointment. None of the new energy which we had been led to expect on the deposition of "Wait and See" was visible either at home or in the field. We had to wait the whole year without seeing anything good. Owing to the change of plan which held up everything for the great Nivelle offensive, the Germans were able to release themselves from the Somme—a feat comparable to the British evacuation of the Dardanelles eighteen months earlier—and to establish themselves on the Hindenburg line. The Nivelle offensive, when it came, was a catastrophe, and while the French army was recovering it became essential that the British army should keep the Germans engaged, as it did mainly by the terrible and seemingly fruitless struggle at Paaschendaele. In the meantime the submarine menace seemed to grow every week more formidable. The only gleam of light was the entry of America into the war, but there were moments when it seemed doubtful whether the American army would be able to cross the Atlantic. Black as the situation looked outwardly, one got no encouragement when one sought to ascertain the inside view.

This year was, for the journalist, by far the most difficult of the war. I knew all about the situation in France as it was after Nivelle's failure, but nothing could be said about it in the papers. This was inevitable and right, but what was not inevitable and, as it seemed to me, very wrong and unjust, was that blame should be thrown upon the British Commander-in-Chief and his colleagues for the part which they were compelled to play in holding the Germans engaged, and that they should be said to be wasting lives by obstinately battering against impregnable barriers. I went to France in the autumn and learnt from personal inquiry and observation what the situation was on the French part of the line, then visited Haig at Cassel, and afterwards saw with my own eyes what was going forward on the Northern front. One very uncomfortable afternoon I spent in a gas-mask with gas-shells coming awkwardly close, and horrible things going on in the air. Haig had insisted on my being drilled to the gas-mask before he would let me leave Cassel on this expedition, and though I thought such caution unnecessary at the time, I saw the utility of it a few hours later. On my way back to my night quarters I met a distinguished officer who had just come from London bringing news that the Prime Minister had taken one of the steps reported by Winston Churchill in his "World Crisis" (p. 339), which "obviously courted the resignation of the Chief of the Imperial Staff." He asked me for my opinion, and it was given very emphatically that, whatever mortifications he might have to submit to, Sir William Robertson should on no account resign. I said that if Sir William resigned, Sir Douglas Haig would be left without support, and that he, too, in all probability, would either have to resign or be dismissed from his command within the next few weeks. Then the door would be opened to the denudation of the West front, which was what we all most feared, but what appeared to be contemplated as the desirable next move in Whitehall.

Much trouble followed for me and for my military friends, and finding that my visits to commanding officers brought them under suspicion of "intriguing with journalists," I decided to forgo them in future. But to stand by Haig and Robertson in their stand for the Western front seemed to me at that moment an imperative duty, and I was one of a little band of journalists of both parties who had vowed to act together for this purpose. Northcliffe, who was originally one of these, went over to the other camp at the end of 1917, but Repington, who was then military correspondent of *The Times*, very stoutly refused to follow and transferred his services to the *Morning Post*, where he continued to testify to the western faith. What really caused alarm in these weeks was the rumour that schemes were on foot for transferring a considerable part of the British army to the Eastern front for an offensive towards Vienna, such as the

Prime Minister hinted at in his speech in Paris in December, or some other scheme favoured by the "Easterners." I could not conceive how such a plan could be even dreamt of in the situation as I had seen it in France. There, as one saw, the numbers of available fighting men were all too few on both the French and the British lines, and the withdrawal of any considerable number of them must either have uncovered the Channel ports or left the Germans free to wheel round and attack the French before they were ready. It seemed highly improbable that, with these tempting objectives under their noses, the Germans would have withdrawn to reinforce the Austrians on the Eastern front, and quite possible that they would have irretrievably broken the lines in the West before our forces had got to the East and were in a position to operate there.

For these reasons I never could take any serious interest in the theoretical arguments between Easterners and Westerners. Many of the Easterners' schemes were ingenious and attractive, and on paper it was always easy to contrast their liveliness and originality with the dull and costly hammering on the West front. But they all assumed a liberty of choice which, in fact, did not exist. Rash though a civilian judgment might be, I thought it incredible that anyone could have seen the situation in France as I had seen it in 1917, and yet think it possible to withdraw troops in any large numbers from the Western front. It was, of course, true that for these months we were on the defensive; and this, I was told many times, was repugnant to the higher strategy, which saw tempting opportunities for attack in other fields. But what threatened, if our lines were weakened, was a German offensive in far superior force at the vital point, and it seemed impossible that even the higher strategy could favour that. All this, I think, was abundantly verified in March, 1918, when the weakness of the line at one vital point gave the Germans their opportunity. What would have happened then, if the Easterners had had their way, is a very unpleasing conjecture.

The bitterness which this East and West controversy engendered was very great, and played a large part in the rising quarrel between the Coalition and other Liberals. Whatever its merits, the thing in debate was in no sense political, and

I should say that quite as many Conservatives as Liberals were Westerners. But more and more it took on a political colour as between Lloyd George and his Liberal critics, and came finally to a stormy climax in the Maurice debate. It seemed to me that in publishing his correspondence with the Chief of the Staff, General Maurice had done a timely and courageous thing with entirely salutary public consequences, and that those of us who thought with him were bound to support him, even though we could not complain of the disciplinary consequences which he had invited by a calculated breach of regulations. But the Maurice debate was badly bungled and, in its results, disastrous to the Independent Liberals. Those of them who voted in this division were said to be beyond forgiveness, and the anti-Liberal wrath was concentrated on them at the December election. In spite of these consequences, I cannot see how any honourable body of men who thought the matter important could have flinched from expressing their views on this occasion.

One pleasant memory comes back to me of the year 1917. The Directors of the *Westminster* discovered that a certain day was the twenty-first anniversary of my appointment as editor, and Sir Harry Webb, who was then chairman, gave a dinner at his house to celebrate the occasion. Asquith came and said generous things about my behaviour as a journalist which I shall always remember with gratitude, and among the other guests were McKenna, Harcourt, Donald Maclean, Cowdray, Alec Murray, John Gulland, Jack Brunner, Oswald Partington and Frank Newnes. A silver salver bearing all their names was afterwards presented to me as a memento of this occasion. One touch of sadness mingles with my memory of this kindness, for with us that evening was Webb's son, a charming and gallant lad, scarcely out of his teens, who was killed a few weeks later at the front. Asquith presided again six years later at a public dinner given to me at the National Liberal Club, after I had resigned the editorship of the *Westminster Gazette*.

II

I was in Paris in the second week of October, and saw Clemenceau at his house in Rue Franklin. I learnt later that

I had chanced upon the moment when he was preparing the grand offensive which brought him into power for the last stage of the war, and I was conscious of something in the air. He talked to me for a few minutes, told me to sit where I was while he talked to someone else who was waiting for him in another room, then passed out by one door and reappeared a few minutes later by another, resumed our conversation, then vanished again and reappeared again. His talk was vehement and his adjectives unsparing; I have seldom heard so many kinds of human infirmity so remorselessly characterized in so short a time. I was not in a very cheerful mood when I came in, but my spirits sank deeper as I heard his candid opinions about the individuals in his own and other countries into whose hands by some mysterious Providence our common cause had been delivered. But of his own courage and temper there could be no doubt. The Allies, he kept repeating, were invincible; they could not even defeat themselves. There was a flicker of humour in some of his portraits of his contemporaries which saved them from malice, and he softened visibly when presently we began to talk of his old friend Morley. Nothing, he said, perplexed him more than Morley's attitude. How could he, the friend of France, who had known her so well and interpreted her so wisely, fail to see what was at stake? He bade me take his love to Morley and say he was sad but not angry.

During the same visit to Paris I went more than once to the Hôtel Crillon, which was now handed over to the Americans, and saw and talked to American officers, who were then arriving in considerable numbers. There had been some slight apprehension of what their attitude might be when they arrived on this scene. The stage American who thinks Europe a "back number" and teaches every man his own business was in some people's minds. The real Americans who now presented themselves were modest and courteous gentlemen, who spoke diffidently of their own capacities, and said frankly that they had had no experience of the modern kind of warfare, and had come first of all to learn. They seemed to include in their number an exceptionally high proportion of able and cultivated men who would have held their own with the best-trained professionals in any army, and, had the war been prolonged, they would probably have thrown up some commanders of genius. The Americans suffered, as we did, from a paucity of professional officers and the necessity of falling back on comparatively untrained men who had to buy their experience as we bought ours. It seemed to be a rule on all the fronts that none of the armies could learn from each other's experience. Each listened politely to the other, and each in turn committed the same mistakes. If the American was in this respect like the other armies, it was certainly not from conceit, but simply because it shared the generous spirit which led all in turn to think they could do the impossible in spite of the experience of those who went before.

I delivered Clemenceau's message in person to Morley, and it led to a friendly argument as to how a true friend of France should behave. Let me add a word about Morley in these years. For a year after 1914 I saw nothing of him. I wrote to him when he resigned, but he answered briefly that he was going to take himself out of the world, and in the meantime: "Hell must blaze." A year later, seeing a report in the paper that he had been ill, I wrote again, and this time got a charming and affectionate reply. He said in his characteristic way that he was "full of remorse" for the way he had treated me, and if I would ask him to dinner the following week he would come "with ever so much gladness." But in the meantime he was doing a thing which he had always intended to do, and he saw no reason why it should wait until he had departed. The next post would bring me a little packet containing something which, if it served no other purpose, might "do as a paper-weight on my table." The packet came, and in it were the Seals of the Secretary of State for India, which, according to custom, he had retained on the death of King Edward. I need not say that I have not used them as a paper-weight, or that I value them more than much fine gold.

In this charming way the broken thread was mended, and I saw him frequently during the next two years, and up to within a fortnight of his death, sometimes at Wimbledon, sometimes at my own house and occasionally in his familiar corner at the Carlton Restaurant. In 1919 I planned a luncheon at which he was to meet Asquith for the first time since the beginning of the war, but Lord Knollys asked me to let him be host, and the little party came off at Claridge's, with Asquith, Morley, Esher and myself as his guests.

III

There is nothing uncommon in statesmen and governments being toppled over in a long war; the far more singular event is that any of them should survive. We Independent Liberals did not like the Coalition Government of 1916, and our faith in Lloyd George had been declining in the last eighteen months of the war, but we should have felt no political grievance at his continuing in power or coming back to it in any normal election. What we did resent was the vindictiveness of the 1918 Election and the unnecessary and altogether exceptional means taken to extinguish opposition and inflate a majority which would have been abundant in any case. But even this was of small importance compared with the beating up of passion on the eve of the Peace Conference, for the result was that Lloyd George went to the Conference loaded with chains of his own making, and that the country lost the power of putting in the decisive word for a wise peace which had been its special contribution at the end of the Napoleonic struggle.

Independent Liberals lived over again in December, 1918, all that they had lived through in June, 1900, and there was a whimsical kind of irony in the fact that the patriotic avenger on this occasion was the leading pro-Boer on the previous occasion, and that for remorseless electioneering he altogether beat his predecessor out of the field. I went with mingled feelings to the Mansion House lunch to President Wilson on the day when the results were announced. Asquith was there as well as Lloyd George, and a slip of paper was passed along to me from the reporters' table to say that Asquith had been defeated in East Fife. Public men are supposed to be proof against the common emotions, and Asquith showed not the slightest sign of any inward disturbance, but it seemed to me a peculiar refinement of cruelty that he should be compelled to be just there, at that moment, in the same company with Lloyd George.

I was honoured with an invitation to the State Banquet to President Wilson at Buckingham Palace, and it was a pleasure to witness the orderly splendour of a great ceremonial occasion. For this occasion the usual list of official and ex-official persons had been enlarged to include men of note in science, art and the professions, and there can seldom have been brought together a more interesting gathering from all walks in life. The wear was ordinary evening dress, in deference to the Republican simplicity of the chief guest, but all the other accessories, including the gold plate from Windsor, were there. I was struck by the perfect mastery of the occasion by both King and Queen. The King introduced each of his guests separately to the President, with an appropriate word about each; his speech at the Banquet was direct and simple and admirably delivered, striking just the right note of contrast with the polished fluency of the President. Wilson spoke for about half an hour without looking at a note, and never dropped a word or hesitated for a moment between one sentence and another. The King, talking afterwards to his guests, commented on the extraordinary accomplishment of this performance. "But then," he added modestly, "I am no orator, which is perhaps a good thing for a constitutional ruler. My cousin, the German Emperor, was a great orator."

I was introduced to the President afterwards and had ten minutes' talk with him. I saw in him a certain resemblance to Joseph Chamberlain; he had the same immobility of face, the same penetrating quality in his look and voice. He spoke of the burden which had been laid upon him in the past years, and his regret that there were so few people with whom he had been able to have a "real talk." Then he flattered me by saying that I was one of the English "publicists" whose views he should like to know, and he hoped he would have another opportunity of "laying his mind alongside mine." If or when I came to Paris I was to be sure to let him know. This sounded hopeful, but nothing came of it. When I submitted my name in Paris a few weeks later, the President was ill and unable to see anyone.

IV

I paid two visits to Paris during the Peace Conference, and if there ever was a case in which the broth was spoilt by too many cooks, it was this. The inordinate number of the delegations, and the multitude of secretaries, experts, lawyers, statisticians, typists, interpreters, cartographers, which each brought with it, made a crowded and tumultuous scene. Not even a minor official or under-secretary seemed able to move without trailing a dozen people of both sexes after him. And then, in addition to these, all the "causes" had gathered from all over the world, and were holding conferences and meetings and buttonholing statesmen and journalists at all hours of the day and night. The journalist who moved about in this throng was figuratively torn to pieces; he came out bruised and shaken, with his head spinning and his pockets bulging with petitions and memoranda establishing the indefeasible claims of everybody to everything. One's first impression (and one's last) was that the aggregate of conundrums dumped down at Paris was altogether beyond the capacity of the human brain as it functioned at that moment, and that the nations would be happy if they came out of it without a new quarrel being superimposed on the former one.

I sat for many hours in a Committee of the League of Nations Union presided over by Léon Bourgeois, who brought down to us questions from the Official Committee which was then framing the Covenant. We were not a large body, but we were of many nationalities, and the necessity of translating into three languages made our proceedings very slow. But the League was the one tangible thing to lay hold of in this puzzling world, and in their zeal for the League the moderates made concession to the die-hards on other parts of the Treaty, which they would not have dreamt of otherwise. Some of them said openly that a bad treaty with the League in it was better than a good treaty with the League out of it. For weeks together the chaos seemed hopeless, and responsible people talked gloomily of the Conference breaking up in confusion. In the end the absolute necessity of some kind of settlement seemed to govern everything. To get something agreed was said to be more important than whether that something was fair or workable. When the Treaty finally appeared, many of its authors explained privately that they objected to large parts of it, but had acted under a stern compulsion lest a worse thing should befall. The moderates consoled one with the hope that the Treaty *with* the League would be an Ithuriel's spear healing the wounds that it inflicted; the die-hards scoffed at the League and said they had consented to it to humour Wilson. What would have happened in Paris if it had been known that America would reject the League is beyond guessing. Everyone in those days took for granted that Americans would accept what was thought to be their own plan.

A general impression which one bore away from Paris was that the statesmen who were left in possession at the end of the war were the least likely to make a good peace. The Paris peacemakers spoke the language and thought the thoughts of war, and fought each other as stubbornly as they had previously fought the enemy. They found it extraordinarily difficult to make a settlement among themselves, let alone a settlement with the enemy. Such a collection of pugnacious men from all quarters of the globe was surely never assembled in one city as in Paris during these months, and if the actual fighting men had not been weary of fighting, the Great War might easily have had a Balkan sequel. It was actually the fighting men who, after great trouble, finally imposed upon the politicians the cessation of the blockade of Germany. One felt that in an intelligently ordered Utopia all statesmen who claimed to have "won the war" would, *ipso facto*, be disqualified from the making of peace.

I saw Botha for the last time during one of these visits to Paris. I ran into him one morning in that highly congested thoroughfare, the hall of the Majestic Hotel, where the British Delegation was lodged, and he took me off to his room and for an hour told me stories of his campaign in South-West Africa, and of the abortive Dutch rebellion. They were wonderful and thrilling stories told with amazing animation. As I listened I could not help recalling the evening, sixteen years earlier, when he had come to our house in London and told us stories of another South African War.

Unwittingly during these weeks I put a spoke in Lloyd George's wheel and in a manner which, if I had foreseen it, I should have least desired. Sisley Huddleston, who then represented the *Westminster* in Paris, sent me an interview with an unnamed "high authority," which clearly indicated to those who knew how to read such things that the Prime Minister was feeling his way back from his worse to his better self. It was a wise and welcome plea for moderation, and especially for the putting away of foolish and extravagant ideas about reparations in favour of what was practicable and politic. It pointed out the difficulties and the interminable consequences of demanding more than Germany could perform and inflicting on her wounds which she could not be expected to forgive or forget. There was nothing in it which at this distance of time would not be regarded as good sense and sound policy, and I published it without the smallest hesitation, well knowing that Huddleston would not have sent it to me or made any claims to inspiration unless he was sure of his ground. But no sooner had it appeared than a storm arose in the House of Commons, and at the instigation of Northcliffe and Kennedy Jones the signatures of more than 200 M.P.'s were hastily obtained to a minatory telegram, which was despatched to Lloyd George in Paris. Under this pressure he returned suddenly to London to face his critics, who demanded explanations of the "moderation article," as it was scornfully called. I had greatly hoped that he would meet them on this ground and boldly repeat in the House of Commons what Sisley Huddleston had written. In this I was disappointed. He did not disown the views expressed in the article, but he turned upon Northcliffe and trounced him in a hurricane speech which changed the entire issue and carried him through amid ringing cheers. It was an astonishing piece of Parliamentary wizardry, but, from the point of view of the Treaty, a bad day's work. Huddleston had only done his duty, and he was perfectly right, in my judgment, in attaching high importance to what had been told him, but I was left with the reflection that if the article had done good, the telegram had more than undone it. It was in the highest degree undesirable that the Prime Minister should be exposed to this browbeating, or that there should have been such a demonstration of British die-hardism at that moment, and the result was seen in the subsequent hardening at Paris. The *Encyclopædia Britannica*, I see, puts it on record that this manifestation "diminished Lloyd George's authority and weakened his resistance to the military policy of France." To be just, one must add that he had already weakened his own hand by his electioneering in the previous December, but undoubtedly this incident made it more difficult for him to find a way out of that entanglement.

Both Huddleston and I were left in a position of some embarrassment. The circumstances forbade explanations, and we had to submit to the suggestion that we had either been hoaxed or were romancing—a suggestion that was entirely removed in 1922, when it was shown by Signor Nitti that the views expressed in the article corresponded with those expressed in a document circulated by Lloyd George to the members of the Peace Conference at the time. Huddleston's conduct was irreproachable from first to last, but, not for the first time, I felt the difficulty in which a newspaper is placed when it puts out "feelers" for a policy (or a change of policy) which is still in doubt. The "feeler" may bring all the forces of reaction suddenly into play, and if the policy is not followed up, the newspaper is left in the air with its reputation damaged.

V

In the years that followed the peace, the little band of Independent Liberals, or "Wee Frees," as they were now called, did what seemed to me some of the best work done by a Parliamentary group in my lifetime, and I worked hand in glove with them at the *Westminster*. It was a special pleasure to be able to do a little to help my old friend Donald Maclean, who led the party for a time in Asquith's absence, and showed remarkable capacity and courage in a very difficult situation. Maclean had been closely associated with the *Westminster* from 1908 onwards, and during the subsequent years scarcely a week had passed in which I had not spent two or three hours in talk with him. An editor can have no more valuable help than this constant touch with a leading unofficial member of Parliament, and Maclean in the previous years had kept me informed about the currents of opinion in the House, the movements coming up from the back benches, the new stars appearing on the horizon, and many other things which the editor whose contact is mainly with officials and party leaders is apt to miss. If the *Westminster* had been acceptable to the rank and file in Parliament, it was largely to Maclean that the credit belonged.

There is nothing to disclose about these times which is not generally known. The little party kept to itself, was faithful in attendance and did a large part of the work of a normal Opposition. It forgathered once a week at lunch while Parliament was sitting, to hear someone speak on a subject of importance, and more than once I was invited to address it. It was veritably a band of brothers, and it had only the one thought of keeping Liberalism alive in these evil times, and resisting the tendencies which would have merged it in something not itself. The Irish question played a large part in its activities, and it maintained a stubborn protest against the "black and tan" methods of the Government. I wrote a great many articles on this subject in the *Westminster*, not in the least palliating the guilt of the Irish assassins—indeed my denunciations of their crimes brought me a series of threatening letters from the Irish camp—but stoutly maintaining that a Government which adopted their methods demoralized law and justice and fell to their level.

I shall return to the story of the *Westminster Gazette* in another chapter. It is sufficient to say here that from 1923 onwards my regular London life was over. I was now released from daily attendance at a newspaper office and free to live mainly in the country—which for long had been our dream. We had taken a house at Cobham, in Kent, in the last year of the war, and for two years I had come up daily for half the year, catching a train at 7 o'clock in the morning. Soon after I had resigned the editorship of the *Westminster* we gave up our London house and came to live where we are now living, in the Weald of Kent. These years have not been inactive. In addition to three or four newspaper articles a week I have written the Life of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman and two other books. Cable and telephone make many things possible. For a year or more I wrote a weekly article on European affairs for the *New York Evening Post*, and, though it was written in a Kent village, I do not think it ever failed to appear punctually the next day. Then there have been opportunities for the long travel of which something will be said in another chapter. London is still within easy reach, but after years of Fleet Street it is pleasant to look up from one's desk and see the missel-thrushes at work on their nests in the lime trees by the lawn.

The life of Campbell-Bannerman was not all plain sailing. The choice of biographer lay with Pentland, C. B.'s literary executor—whose too early death was a great grief to his friends—and I am afraid he had much trouble about it. Morley strongly objected to my being chosen, and said frankly to me that he had done so. He thought that I should be unsympathetic and that I should not tell the story of the South African War as he thought it ought to be told. Several times he inquired how I was getting on, said he was anxiously waiting for the result, and expressed the hope that as his time was short I would not be too long in finishing the book. Unhappily he died while it was going through the press, but Massingham, who had shared his uneasiness, partly consoled me by professing himself completely satisfied.

For part of this time I have been "in politics" in a manner which was new to me and outside my previous experience. For while I was in India in 1926, there came a cable from the Executive Committee of the National Liberal Federation asking me to accept their unanimous nomination as President of that body. It was the highest and kindest compliment they could have paid to a man in my position, one who was in no sense a public man, who had taken no part in the organization of the Party and had never been in Parliament. It was entirely unexpected and gave me very real pleasure, the memory of which survives all the difficulties which attended my year of office. But here I touch an unfinished story, which belongs to the journalism of the day rather than to the narrative of things past.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE MILNER MISSION

Appointment and Postponement—An Unorthodox Arrival—An Impenetrable Thicket—Breaking Through—A Proclamation—The "Non-Official" Member and His Part—A Touch of Melodrama—Trouble at Tantah—A Journey to Upper Egypt—An Odd Exit—The Negotiation in London—The Report and Its Fate.

I

THE previous chapters have been more or less a consecutive narrative, but I have left for separate treatment certain episodes which stand by themselves, and I will take first the Milner Mission to Egypt of which I was a member.

One day in May, 1919, Curzon, who was then Foreign Secretary, asked me to come and see him at his house, and said he wished me to be one of a Mission of six which the Government proposed to send out to Egypt in the early autumn. He said I was his choice, and that he had chosen me specially to represent Liberal opinion on a body which would otherwise be mainly official or ex-official. Milner was to be President and had authorized him to convey to me a strong expression of his wish that I should go. He said genially that with Milner, Rodd and myself as three out of the six, and himself appointing us, it would probably be called a "Balliol conspiracy," but he was willing to risk that.

I saw great difficulties; politics, both home and foreign, were very critical, and it seemed to me improbable that my employers at the *Westminster* would be willing to spare me for the four months which was mentioned as the minimum time. I asked for a week to consider it, and went first to consult Asquith, who said without a moment's hesitation that I *must* go, and that no obstacle should be allowed to stand in the way. This was also the opinion of the *Westminster* directors, who very handsomely volunteered to allow me my salary during the whole time of my absence. At the end of the week I accepted, and shortly afterwards the decision to send the Mission, and the names of its members, were publicly announced. Then for nearly four months I heard nothing more about it. About the middle of September I happened to meet a member of the Government, who volunteered to me that the Government were in much doubt about sending the Mission. Egypt was highly disturbed; there was the possibility of awkward incidents; to get us into Egypt safely and to prevent accidents while we were there might be no easy matter. What did I think?

I said that, awkward as things might be, it seemed to me still more awkward to withdraw the Mission, after it had been publicly announced, in face of the agitation in Egypt, and that though I was not authorized to speak for my colleagues I felt sure that none of them would wish that reason to be alleged. My own strong opinion was that we ought to have been in Egypt by now, and that we had better be despatched as quickly as possible. Six weeks passed before I heard anything more, and then one day early in November I received a warning to be ready within a week. We sailed from Marseilles in the "Malta," a small and ancient P. & O., on November 28th, and visited the Island of Malta and lunched with the Governor on our way. My wife went with me, and until Lady Rodd and Lady Maxwell arrived some weeks later, she was the only lady with the Mission. The woman's side of it was by no means unimportant, and she made friends with many Egyptian ladies, some of whom are still among her regular correspondents.

I suppose our arrival and safe conduct were a matter of some anxiety to the authorities. At all events they took every precaution. We were landed in a tender which took us straight to a heavily guarded train, and aeroplanes circled about us all the way from Port Said to Cairo. When we arrived at Cairo, the troops were out in the main streets, and their presence drew the Egyptian crowds to these, while we were whizzed off in old and very fast army cars by side streets to the Semiramis Hotel. My wife lost her hat on the way, and the car a part of its bonnet, but the driver had instructions to stop for nothing, and we arrived breathless and dishevelled.

It was not exactly a State entry, and at first we did not seem to be welcome guests to either British or Egyptians. The High Commissioner, Lord Allenby, gave us a banquet at the Residency and introduced us to the Egyptian Ministers, but after that went off to the Sudan and we saw him no more until just before our return. The Egyptian Ministers were a gallant body of men, who had braved much obloquy and no slight personal danger, in order to make a Government, while we were doing our work, but they could give us very little help, and had all they could do to hold their offices and dodge the bombs that were being thrown at them. With the departure of Lord Allenby we seemed to be completely isolated, and were rigorously boycotted by all but a small minority of Egyptians. Sentries tramped all night in front of the hotel in which we were lodged, all the back windows were boarded up, lest we should be sniped from the streets; detectives were assigned to us, and we were warned never to walk about unless attended by them. This we decided was beyond endurance, and having assured the police that they would not be held responsible, we went about as we chose.

For a fortnight we did nothing, and seemed to be surrounded by an impenetrable thicket. The Egyptian newspapers declared with one accord that we had come to rivet their chains on the Egyptian people, to extinguish their nationality, to place them permanently under the Protectorate and martial law, and exhorted all patriotic Egyptians to give us a wide berth. The few Egyptians whom we saw told us quite firmly that there was nothing whatever to be done, if we felt compelled to hold to the "Protectorate." No one knew what it meant (and we ourselves were very uncertain), but whatever it meant, it was damned beyond redemption, and attempts to define it or explain it would merely make bad worse. This raised a very serious question. Our terms of reference required us "to report on the existing situation in the country and the form of Constitution which, under the Protectorate, will be best calculated to promote its peace and prosperity, the progressive development of self-governing institutions, and the protection of foreign interests." A strict interpretation of this would, I suppose, have justified us in reporting that there was no constitution which, *under the Protectorate*, would have had the desired results, and leaving it at that or seeking fresh instructions. An ordinary Commission would, perhaps, have felt obliged to take this course, but we were not quite an ordinary Commission. Our Chairman was a Cabinet Minister in touch with the Government; we had been sent out to find the solution of a difficult and urgent political problem, and our return with a mere negative would have been taken to mean that there was no alternative to a policy of repression.

We were all of us—Milner most of all—determined not to be driven to this conclusion until all possible alternatives had been explored. But while we sat marooned in the Hôtel Semiramis, intelligent research into any aspect of the Egyptian problem was extremely difficult. At the end of a fortnight I suggested to Milner that we should issue a little proclamation disclaiming the interpretation which had been placed upon our Mission, laying stress on its positive side, and inviting all expressions of opinion. At the same time we debated among ourselves and came to the conclusion that the best thing we could do was to clear our own minds as to the essential British and foreign interests in Egypt, and having done so, see how far the demand for Egyptian self-government could be adjusted to them. I wrote a little memorandum on this subject, and gave it to Milner, who expressed his general agreement, and said his own thoughts were moving in the same direction. Our proclamation was issued on December 27th, and though it had no effect in breaking the official boycott, it undoubtedly had great effect in encouraging the friendlies and moderates to engage in private and intimate conversation with us.

The subsequent developments are told in full in the Report of the Mission, which traces the stages through which we passed to our final conclusion. In after years I have seen articles in Conservative papers making me the villain of the piece and alleging that I exerted some influence upon my colleagues which caused them to turn their backs, for this occasion only, on their lifelong devotion to the Empire. I do not wish to disclaim any responsibility, but this is an absurdity which is not worth arguing about. We all travelled the same road by the same steps, and I cannot remember any occasion on which we seriously differed. If we had seriously differed, I doubt if any of us would have succeeded in moving Milner from any position to which he was firmly anchored. I cannot profess to speak for him, but from my many talks with him I should say that two considerations chiefly weighed with him. First, he had very clearly in his mind the seriousness of the alternative, if we failed to make a settlement with Egypt; and next, being an old Egyptian official and a lifelong student of Egyptian affairs, he did not share the vulgar opinion that Egypt was part of the British Empire, but held, on the contrary that the restoration of her independence, subject to certain essential safeguards, was the logical and natural development of the occupation and our own pledges in regard to it. His view was that if the Egyptians did not want us to govern them and could keep order and maintain solvency without us, we were under no obligation to undertake the invidious, difficult and very expensive task of governing them against their will. I may add here that the Mission took very special pains to obtain a careful estimate of the steps which would have to be taken, if a settlement could not be obtained.

Though on these main lines we all kept step together, it is true that my own part was in one respect a little different from that of my colleagues. Early in the day Egyptian Nationalists who were anxious to build a bridge singled me out as the one member of the Mission who was neither an official nor a soldier, and who in ordinary politics was known to be a Radical and an opponent of the Government. It was therefore assumed that communications could be held with me without technical departure from the boycott. This was a useful idea, and it was actively fostered by Osmond Walrond, an old friend both of Milner's and mine, who knew everybody in Cairo and was indefatigable in the cause of the Mission. Walrond, perhaps, painted me a little redder than I am, but he contrived to arrange for me a series of interviews with prominent Nationalists, who would never have come near the

Hôtel Semiramis. Some of these interviews were conducted with extraordinary precautions which lent a pleasant spice of adventure to the proceedings. I went after dark in closed cars to houses I never could find again in daylight, and held whispered conversations in rooms of which the doors were carefully locked before a word was spoken. Or I went to a shop in the Bazaar, pretended to buy things which I didn't want, until on an agreed word being spoken I was taken into an inner room and found it full of ardent politicians. I look back on it all with a pleasant sense of melodrama, but I think it really helped to break the ice which till then had frozen us in. The general impression I took away was that beneath the hostile surface there was a real desire to come to terms and find a way out of an impossible situation. Word went to Zaghlul, who remained stubbornly in Paris, that we were not as black as we were painted, and not a few of his party established useful relations with the Mission behind the scenes. All this paved the way for the negotiations which took place in the following year in London.

II

Another duty which Milner assigned to me was to travel in the Provinces and investigate the causes of the March rebellion. A visit which, accompanied by Ingram, one of our secretaries, I paid to Tantah, ended in serious trouble not for us, but for the British authorities and a considerable number of Egyptians. It happened in this way. After I had spent many laborious hours searching files and criminal records, the Governor of the Province said he would like to show me the town. He thereupon put me into a car and, with one car full of police preceding and another following, paraded me about the streets and in front of the principal mosque for an hour or more, landing me finally at the official Rest House, where I was to have lunch. Two hours later he rushed into the Rest House in a very agitated condition and exclaimed breathlessly, "They have discovered who you are." I replied that since he himself had taken special pains to advertise my presence, this did not at all surprise me. But he was past argument, and could only repeat that the students were pouring down from the mosque, and that the whole town was at their heels and rushing towards the station, from which they imagined that I was going to depart that afternoon.

This was not at all my plan. I had several appointments that afternoon and the next morning, and had arranged to leave by road the following day. So I explained to the Mudir that it really didn't matter if they chose to demonstrate at the station, provided I wasn't there; to which he replied that there was no knowing what they would do next, and kept repeating that *he* would be held responsible if any harm came to me. He implored me to cancel my engagements, to remain where I was till dark, and then to go by dark in a car which he would provide. This seemed to me ignominious, but, knowing that the brunt of the affair would fall on him and not upon me, I put it to the British Inspector, who was staying in the Rest House, and he was strongly of opinion that I should not be driven off the ground by the mob. I therefore decided to keep to my original plan, and depart as arranged on the morrow. One little complication was that I had somehow to get across the town to the house of the official with whom I was staying, and the main streets were in the hands of the mob. There was a lull after dinner, and it was decided that the safest course was for me to go alone with an Egyptian boy to guide me. He was a splendid boy, and took me with the utmost coolness through side streets and narrow lanes which were all but deserted. But to be in an Eastern town by night with a fanatical mob after one is not the kind of adventure one would choose, and the sound of that mob, as I threaded my way through the lanes of Tantah, is still a rather haunting memory.

The lull continued the next morning, and I did my business unmolested and departed at the hour fixed in the original programme. But that unfortunately was not the end. A few hours after I had gone the rioting broke out again, and continued almost without interruption for the next fortnight. Troops had to be called in to assist the police; some lives were lost and there were many casualties. The attack was now concentrated upon Egyptians who had been civil to me, and any others who were suspected of being weak-kneed Nationalists and friends of the British.

This last aspect of it set me thinking. I had then only begun my journeys, and had a tour mapped out for me in Upper Egypt. It was very important that information should be got at first hand, but it did not seem fair that Egyptians who were willing to give it should be exposed to these reprisals. It was suggested to me that if I went as a private individual and not as member of the Mission this would be avoided. This I decided to do, and an Englishman fluent in Arabic, who was in business in Alexandria (Mr. W. Goldie), volunteered to go with me, and proved a most delightful and useful companion. I could have done nothing without him, but all doors seemed to open at his knock, and he took me to the houses of village headmen and governors of provinces (Omdehs and Mudirs), who talked freely, with my friend interpreting when necessary. Faces were saved by the fiction that I was travelling on business, and in the following week sundry paragraphs appeared in the Arabic newspapers :—

> The Omdeh of X learns with consternation that the English gentleman whom he entertained at his house last week was a member of the Milner Mission. Had he been aware of the identity of this gentleman it is needless to say that he would never have permitted him to darken his doors.

This satisfied everybody, including myself. I had seen and talked to them, they were safe from reprisals, and, so far as I could judge, no one was deceived. In Egypt, as elsewhere, the game of politics is played according to rules, and so long as these are observed, the Egyptians thoroughly enjoy playing it.

So, starting from Luxor, I worked north, visiting Minieh, Beni-Suef, Assiut, and many small towns and villages round about them, and getting finally into the Fayum, which is a charming and most un-Egyptian-like oasis of olive and vine-clad hills and valleys with the beautiful lake of Moeris on its far side. All these places were supposed to be hotbeds of sedition, and I was told many stories of the March rebellion, and listened to the complaints of fellahin who had served with the Labour battalions in the Palestine expedition. These, it turned out, were complaints mainly against Egyptian officials and not against us. On the whole, the service seemed to have been popular and lucrative, and little was made of what was thought to have been the chief grievance, viz. that the fellahin had in fact been conscripted though the recruiting was supposed to be voluntary.

A party of young Egyptians was sent from Cairo to Luxor to watch my movements and see that the boycott was maintained against me by Egyptians in the provinces. I threw them off at the beginning by the device of booking a sleeping berth to Cairo, and slipping off the train in the middle of the night and leaving them to go on. For the next ten days I was free of them, and more important still, the Egyptians whom I visited escaped their espionage. I was aware towards the end that they were on my tracks, and two of them invaded my compartment in the corridor train in the last stage of the journey back to Cairo. My companion put his back to the door and we kept them prisoners, until we saw our way clear out of Cairo Station. These young men were very pertinacious. One of them followed my wife all the way to Assouan, where she went while I was on this business, and endeavoured to cross-examine her as to my whereabouts and that of other members of the Mission.

There was a dark and violent side to the movement which it was impossible to ignore, and which was brought home to us by the frequent attempts to assassinate members of the friendly Ministry. We never could clearly ascertain what the relations of the official Nationalist party were to the plotters of these crimes, but I imagine them to have been very much what the relations of the Parnellites were to the Fenians in the old days of the Irish movement. That is to say, the two organizations were separate and the Constitutional Nationalists could honestly disown complicity with the party of violence, but they were not willing to denounce it or to help the police in tracking down its members. That there were comings and goings between the two groups and that members of the one passed over to the other is highly probable, and fanatical impulses affecting them both had always to be reckoned with. When the "murder gang" was on the warpath, it committed cruelties and atrocities not only against Englishmen, but also against Egyptians who had incurred their displeasure. But there was also an element of pantomime which contributed greatly to the popularity of Egyptian politics. Egyptian lads loved to play the conspirator's game and were too simple to conceal their pleasure in it. It was huge fun for the school-children to come out "on strike" and be given a week's holiday to parade the streets of Cairo shouting "Up with Zaghlul" and "Down with Milner." And what better joke for the girls than the mock serenades with which the young women of Cairo entertained us after dark from boats on the Nile? The Egyptian Nationalist movement could have given points to any American campaign-manager in the number and ingenuity of its devices for attracting children of all ages. I was invited (under cover of the darkness and with every conspiratorial precaution) to have a talk with a party of young Egyptians on a dahabeah. They told me all about it with the utmost good humour, and I came away with a strong impression that they would be extremely dull if ever the Egyptian question were settled.

III

The work in the last few weeks was very laborious. Hurst relieved us of the very difficult and responsible work of inquiring into the legal machinery, but was invaluable in counsel on all subjects. Maxwell, whose knowledge of Egypt and friendly relations with Egyptians of all parties had been of the utmost value, went off with Owen Thomas, who was our agricultural expert, to the Sudan. Rodd and I remained in Cairo and spent long days investigating the working of the Departments and preparing reports, which mostly remained unpublished. Rodd wrote like a professional, and having spent some years in the Egyptian Service at the beginning of his career, he was, like Milner, on familiar ground and carried with him a standard of comparison between the earlier methods and the later, whereas everything was new to me. It was a rare pleasure to work with him; his mind was so fair and open and so wisely critical. In spite of the hard work and occasional anxieties I look back on these months as among the happiest in my life. The work was fascinating, we were the best of friends among ourselves, British officials were always kind and hospitable, and if they felt that we were sitting over them as inquisitors, they did not show it. In spite of everything, we made many Egyptian friends and, though it seethed with politics, we were from the beginning at home in the Mohamed Ali Club, and received there nothing but kindness and courtesy.

No one was more helpful to us than Adly Pasha, afterwards Prime Minister. I never can help thinking of Adly as the Egyptian Balfour. He has the same touch of languor and scepticism and the same knack of rebuking fuss and verbosity as one remembers in the English statesman. He was perfectly cool and nonchalant through all the tumult; he walked in and out of our hotel and gave us at any moment the information and advice that we stood in need of. All this he did without ever abating or concealing his own Nationalist opinions. And then there was the ever-cheerful Ziwar, most courageous of men, chaffing gaily at the ineptitude of bomb-throwers who had chosen the smallest of his colleagues for one of their (happily unsuccessful) attempts, when the more spacious target of his own portly frame was available. Many others I recall: Sarwat, Mohamed Said, Mazlum, Mohamed Mahmoud; Hichmet, who gave us Lucullan feasts; Gallini, always at hand to render friendly personal advice; Hassanein Bey, adventurous traveller and archæologist, not long from Balliol, whose company was always a pleasure. He was by no means the only Oxonian in Egypt. A very rich Pasha invited me to his house one day and presently said he would like to introduce his son, who was "at Oxford University." The son came in, a strapping fellow, who stood between us while the father enlarged upon his virtues. "To show you," he said finally, "how zealous and industrious he is, he actually cabled to me last year for £400 for a special tutor to help him to pass an examination called 'Smalls.' Never did I send money with greater satisfaction." The young man looked at me with apprehension, but I had the proper sense of what one Oxford man owes to another and did no more than slightly incline the lid of my left eye.

On almost my last day in Cairo I took an expedition with my wife to the Sakkara Desert, and, while exploring the

Serapeum, walked over a parapet in the dark and fell headlong into the tomb of a sacred bull. I landed flat on my back on the stone floor and thought for a moment that I had broken my spine. What I had actually done, though it was uncertain at the time, was to break two ribs, but the enormous relief of discovering that my spine was uninjured—since I could move my legs—made any other injury seem trivial. Nevertheless, I presented an awkward problem for my companions, for I could not walk more than a few steps and had somehow to be got out of the tomb and then transported on a donkey over six miles of rough desert. I am sure my wife suffered much more over the business than I did, but a donkey is certainly not a good form of ambulance for a man with broken bones in his back, and to complicate matters, we were no sooner in the open than a deluge of tropical rain came down and drenched us all to the skin. We thought that at least we might have been spared this very unusual aberration from the normal climate of the desert.

I was taken back to Cairo by river in a Government launch for which my friends had telegraphed. We had great difficulties in landing, since the landing stage was occupied by gunboats over which we had to pass, but the bluejackets were helpful, as always, and carried me ashore. Most of the Mission had departed, the hotel was all but deserted, and there was difficulty in getting even hot water. The doctor, when found, would not commit himself, and said there must be an X-ray examination. The next day was the Mohamedan Sunday, and the electric current at the Cairo Hospital was so feeble that nothing was obtained but an enlarged photograph of my heart. My wife decided on a prompt move to the excellent hospital at Alexandria, where I was taken in an ambulance carriage attached to the night train from Cairo. There the injuries were discovered and two days later I was carried on board the "Sphinx" tightly strapped up for the return journey. The bones mended easily enough, but an injury to a muscle in the back was more stubborn, and still makes me liable to be thrown out of action by a quick turn at tennis.

It was an odd exit, and the superstitious drew the moral that the ghost of the Sacred Bull had chosen this way of showing its resentment of the Milner Mission. But the

Mission was not ended with our departure from Egypt. A few months later the contact with Zaghlul which we had failed to establish in Cairo was brought about in London, and he came from Paris with a delegation to debate the basis of a settlement. The sequel is told in full in the Milner Report, and I need not enlarge on it here. It was a good-humoured but very tedious process, in which Milner showed remarkable patience and tenacity. Day after day we went over the same ground in the big room at the Colonial Office, and a new point seemed always to be raised just when we thought we saw daylight. Perhaps it was as well that our proceedings were in French, for the flash-point is less easily reached in a foreign language, and temper becomes subdued in the effort of translating.

The publication of the Report was, of course, a decisive event which changed the direction of British policy, but most of these efforts seemed wasted in the confusion of the next two years. When the Report was finished, Milner seemed tired and exhausted, and after he had retired from the Government, it was left without a champion. I was told in later years that it came as a complete surprise to the Cabinet, which had known nothing of our proceedings or of the steps which had brought us to our conclusion. These seemed revolutionary to Ministers who had not considered the alternatives or refreshed their memory about the history of the British Occupation. I had little touch with the Coalition Government in those days, and though I saw the Prime Minister at his invitation, I failed to impress him. A few months later Adly Pasha and Rushdi Pasha came to London to try a personal negotiation of their own, and both Maxwell and I did our utmost to procure them a hearing, but without much success. Curzon was very hostile; there were endless delays, Rushdi fell seriously ill, and Adly finally departed with nothing accomplished. By ill luck the Egyptian question had collided with the Irish, and the Coalition Government was, I imagine, in no mind to couple its Irish settlement with what its Tory supporters would have called a surrender to Egyptian Nationalists. Another five months passed, during which the situation continued to boil up, and then Allenby, backed by his officials in Egypt, put on pressure which resulted in the issuing of the proclamation of March, 1922. Some decision had by this time become imperative, and I do not doubt that what Allenby did was necessary in very difficult circumstances. But the granting of Independence by Proclamation with the "reserved questions" unsettled was a far worse solution than the Treaty recommended by the Commission, which would have settled the "reserved questions" prior to or simultaneously with the grant of Independence. This we regarded as the essence of our plan, and, if adopted, it would have saved the interminable and fruitless controversies about these questions which have kept Egyptian politics in a seethe, and prevented Egyptian Governments and Parliaments from concentrating on their internal affairs. As I write, this situation is still causing trouble, but even now I hope that the solution proposed by the Mission will eventually be reached.

CHAPTER XXVII

INDIA, 1911 AND 1926

The Great Durbar—The Indian Mysteries—The King-Emperor and the Journalists—Fifteen Years After—A Change of Atmosphere—Swarajists at Delhi—Pleasures of Indian Travel—Memory Pictures—Moghul Architecture.

I

FOR a man chained to a sedentary occupation, I have been fortunate in opportunities of foreign travel. Early I made up my mind that there was no holiday possible for a journalist except out of the country. Ten autumns were spent in Italy, and afterwards as many winter months on the Riviera. There were also short journeys to Germany and Austria, and many fortnights at Etretat, where I shared with Ernest and Reginald McKenna the privilege of bathing on the rough days when the Administration forbade all but the three Englishmen to go in. The war stopped this—otherwise one or other of us would surely have been drowned, for vanity compelled us to brave it, and we grew by degrees a little less equal to the strong swimming and quick movements necessary to dodge big waves on a steep shingly beach. Bathing was always a great part of an autumn holiday, and the old Lido, before fashion invaded it, is still an enchanting memory.

It was not till 1911 that my wife and I could gratify our dream of going a long journey, and then the Coronation Durbar at Delhi afforded the excuse and the opportunity. Urged by our old friend, Sir George Roos-Keppel, the High Commissioner of the North-West Provinces, who invited us to be his guests, I formed the plan of going as my own Special Correspondent, and the Directors of the *Westminster Gazette* very good-naturedly fell in. Up to the last moment it was doubtful whether I should be able to go, for the Agadir trouble still hung over the scene, and the French settlement with the Germans was concluded only a few days before we sailed. India to me was a dazzling and fascinating novelty, and the Durbar beyond all pageantry that I had ever seen or imagined. I had followed Indian affairs closely from the time that Morley went to the India Office, and I went out burdened with the secrets of the King's Proclamation—the transfer of the Capital, the revocation of the partition of Bengal, and so forth—on which I had written articles and left them behind me in sealed envelopes for publication on the appropriate dates. But I felt an extraordinary difficulty in writing the two or three articles a week which I had stipulated to send home. The thing glittered so, the first impressions were so scattered and so confusing that I hardly knew where to begin. Finally, I hit upon the plan of just describing the scene as I went from place to place—the scene as viewed from a railway carriage, and jotted down at the moment in hasty pencil sketches and scribbled notes, with the simple things recorded that the ordinary writer on India takes for granted or thinks too familiar for notice. It was very naïve, but it happened to be what a great many English readers wanted, and it carried me through half my prescribed task. Since we toured in Rajputana, and after the Durbar went to Simla and up to Peshawar and over the Khyber and other Passes, material was abundant.

But the *Westminster*, being a political paper, wanted something more than that, and I knew that, sooner or later, I should be expected to convey my views about the Government of India and its affairs. Here the difficulties began. I asked for information, and it was vouchsafed to me in gushing streams from the highest sources, but I was rapidly made aware that it would be thought gross presumption if I offered any observations of my own. All Anglo-India was on guard against Padgett, M.P., and I was on the even lower plane of the globe-trotting journalist. My host, Roos-Keppel, and Harcourt Butler alone encouraged me to go on and use my own wits; others explained patiently that India was unknowable. You thought you knew something about it when you had been there three months, you knew you knew nothing about it when you had been there three years, and you gave up trying to know anything about it when you had been there thirty. It was deeply discouraging, but journalism is all vanity and presumption and the imperative answer was that I had to do it. My official informants might not see the necessity, but in that case they had the simple remedy of not reading what I wrote.

So seven or eight presumptuous articles dealt with the forbidden theme, and drew a letter from Morley strongly urging that they should be republished with the rest in book form. Hence a little volume, called "The Indian Scene," which sold moderately well at the time, but has now been long out of print. I have no pride in it; Indian officialism had damped me, and I suppressed some things which I felt, and said others with a caution which I feel now was exaggerated. I left India with an uneasy feeling that, high-minded and disinterested as the Raj undoubtedly was, mortal men could not be so infallible as it claimed to be and that its lofty attitude to its own brood of educated Indians must end in trouble.

Let me give a little instance which I did not record at the time. A day or two after our arrival in the camp at Delhi, where we were being entertained by Sir George Roos-Keppel, I went to pay my respects to the Journalists' Camp. The British and European journalists were on one side of it and the Indian journalists on the other. After visiting the first I crossed over to the other and asked to see their President, who greeted me very warmly. Presently he told me that I was the first Englishman who had written his name in their book, though they had been there nearly ten days. I concealed my surprise, and said it was a pleasure to be the first on the list. The next day I received an invitation to dine with the Indian journalists in the following week, which I accepted. News of this apparently got abroad in the Camp, for a day or two later I received a visit from a distinguished Anglo-Indian journalist, an old friend of mine, who said he had been asked by his colleagues to explain certain things to me which, as a newcomer, I could not be expected to know. The chief of these was that in accepting an invitation to dine with the Indian journalists I had broken all the rules and unknowingly lowered the prestige of the craft. He begged me, therefore, to find some way of cancelling this acceptance, and promised me that if I would do so nothing more would be said about it.

My wrath rose, and with the familiarity of old friendship I told him I would see him somewhere first. I took the aggressive and said I thought it a monstrous discourtesy that these people should be invited as guests of the Government of India and then boycotted by the English in the Camp. He said they were "seditious" and that I was encouraging "sedition"; I said I should be seditious if I were treated in that way. He commented severely on the danger of Radical journalists being let loose in India and went away sorrowful. I went to the dinner, spent a very pleasant evening, and arranged to visit the Camp on two mornings in the week, and have talks with certain Indians who would be there to receive me. Very interesting talks they were, mainly about religion and caste and social questions, and hardly at all about politics. Some of them were recorded in "The Indian Scene."

But the incident did not end there. A day or two later I had a letter from Lord Stamfordham, the King's Secretary, who asked me to keep my eyes open for any little thing the King might do outside the official programme. This seemed to me an opportunity. I told Lord Stamfordham exactly what had happened, and said I thought it would be a very useful thing if one of the King's equerries could call at both Journalists' Camps and inscribe his Majesty's name in both the British and Indian books. The King at once authorized this, and the effect was extraordinary. Most of the officials followed suit, the Indian as well as the British book was soon full of illustrious names (including that of my old friend who had brought me the remonstrance) and the sense of grievance and boycott was removed. The fact that the King-Emperor had paid them this compliment blotted out all else, and even the "seditious" joined in the rejoicing. In after years I have had letters from Indian journalists written on the anniversary of this incident, which have begun by reminding me that "on this day the King-Emperor honoured the journalists of India by inscribing his name in their book at the Great Durbar."

II

It is difficult to believe that this was only fifteen years ago. Returning to India in 1926, I found the atmosphere completely changed. So far from warning me off the ground, the British journalists urged me to see and speak to the Indian journalists, including the most extreme, and helped to arrange occasions when I might do so. Indeed, the tables were now a little more than turned, for on one of these occasions at Calcutta I got myself into sad trouble by delivering what I thought to be an innocent homily on the dangers and pitfalls of opposition journalism. It was taken as a rebuke to Indian journalism *de haut en bas*, and the reply came quickly from all over the country. Expressions of injured feelings were still pouring in upon me when I left the country many weeks later. But this in no way marred the very pleasant intercourse which I had with Indian politicians and journalists of all parties and opinions. I spoke with the same freedom to them as they did to me, and received unbounded kindness and hospitality from them. This time the English took it for granted that a travelling Englishman would move about freely in Indian circles, and most of them were doing the same themselves. At public dinners, lunches and conferences one found English and Indian sitting side by side, debating with each other on terms of perfect equality.

A corresponding change had come over the officials. A few of the old school might lament the "lost Dominion," but the majority had fallen in with the new conditions and found, I think, a great deal of pleasure in their work. To me India seemed a much more hopeful and friendly place than when I had last seen it. This, as I interpreted it, was the main result of the "reforms," and it outweighed all the creaking and jolting of very imperfect machinery. However hostile their supposed relations might be, men could not work together on Councils, Assemblies and Committees and rub shoulders in the lobbies of Parliament Houses without establishing a new relation. I was at Delhi in March, 1926, when the Swarajist party walked out of the Assembly, and was greatly struck by the general good humour with which this supposed demonstration of irreconcilable hostility was conducted. The Swarajist leaders came to see me in the afternoon to ask me what I thought about it, and I told them frankly that I thought it disastrous. But I could not take it tragically, for I had seen Indian and English members chaffing each other in the lobby afterwards; and when someone suggested that the Indian leader was actuated by personal hostility to the British, he instantly wrote to the papers to say that on the contrary he counted Englishmen among his best friends and that the "sun-dried bureaucrats" were very good fellows when you got to know them.

This time the officials encouraged me to express my opinions freely for what they were worth, and since they were now up to the neck in my own familiar business of politics I saw no reason to hold back. So I set down and afterwards published, in a book called "The Changing East," the impressions which Indian politics made on an English journalist. Necessarily they involved me in some controversy; for it was impossible to give equal satisfaction to both Indians and British, and a third party who drops in on their controversies from another continent must always have the appearance of an interloper. What was specially in my mind in writing about this journey was, so far as I could, to counteract the idea, which the old school of officials had to some extent created, that the Indian Civil Service under the new conditions is not a fit career for an enterprising and self-respecting young man. The very contrary seems to me to be the truth. The political experiment now being made in India is one of the most fascinating in all the world, and it gives scope for a far wider range of qualities than any merely bureaucratic service. The Indian official of the new type may make his mark not only as an administrator, but as Parliamentarian and public man, and if he has character and vision, he may exert an influence out of all proportion to his official position. The generally meaningless phrase that a country is in a state of transition does really apply to India, and we have begun by applying Western methods, some of which may, as time goes on, need to be abandoned or modified. To encourage India to be Indian and to develop her institutions in an Indian way which will bridge the gap between the masses and the educated few is, as I see it, the way of safety for her and for us; but it must, for many years to come, be experiment all the way, calling for patience and insight from those who are engaged in it.

III

The pleasures of Indian travel are to me among the greatest in life, and I wish I could live over again the months that I have spent in the country. I love the Indian lads with their quick wits and charming manners and effervescing intelligence, and have never spent happier hours than in being bombarded by them. I like the serious talks on religion and philosophy and the Hindu way of life which one may have with their elders, if one takes a little trouble to find out congenial spirits. Then there is the vast background of the common life led by the millions in the villages—so different from anything else in the world—with its intricate maze of custom and tradition, its loyalties and its obligations, its paganism and its piety, its patience and cheerfulness and its unending struggle to fill its belly. The passing traveller cannot hope to penetrate this life, but it is a perpetual challenge to him, and keeps him on edge with the sense of a fascinating unexplored world.

I have never felt the need of doing much in India except walk or drive about and keep my eyes open. The show places are wonderful enough, but the everyday scene is the main interest. You may see more beautiful faces in a morning's walk in an Indian bazaar than you would see in a week in a European city, and for variety of human types there is no country like it. Much is said about the clash between races, and the baffling political questions which divide Indian and British. Yet the slightest advance from your side seems to bring an immediate response, and you bear away memories of kindness and friendliness from almost every place you visit. My wife and I went into the Great Mosque at Agra on the day of the Bakr 'Id, and found a multitude of people assembled there. We stood aside till the prayer was over, and bowed to the Imam as he came down from his pulpit.

It seemed the merest act of courtesy, but immediately we were surrounded by a throng of the faithful saluting in answer, and for twenty minutes we held a sort of levee, with the crowd filing past us, and fathers bringing their children to shake hands with us. An English friend told us that in a long experience of India, he had never heard of such a thing happening before, but then he added that he had never before heard of an Englishman bowing to an Imam, and surmised that we had been taken for Mohammedans.

The charm and variety of the Indian landscape are unfailing. There are the tremendous mountains and the great plains, both in a brilliant atmosphere halving distances and giving an extraordinary sharpness of outline and density of mass to every feature. Memory stores up vivid little pictures—the well by the mango-grove with the bullocks drawing water; the grand trunk road with the camels coming down it, and the monkeys under the trees; the sacred tank with the bathers on the steps and the trees hanging over it; Kinchinjunga swimming in the high blue; a glittering corner of the bazaar at Ajmer or Ahmedabad; Delhi from the Ridge; the Afghan plain from the Khyber; Peshawar rising out of its wooded valley; the sweeping curve of the great Himalayas as seen from Mahatsu or the hills above Simla; the gleaming white sand, black rocks and blue waters of the Indus. The scene, as one remembers it, is alive with people, men, women and children, in all the colours of the rainbow and every gradation of clothes and no clothes down to the innocent nakedness of the fascinating brown children. Evening brings all home, and one looks in memory over the wide plains with the innumerable little processions—men, women, children and bullock carts, the children trotting by the side or on the shoulders of their parents—that make for the villages as the sun goes down.

It is the fashion with the young moderns to speak slightingly of Moghul architecture; they are disappointed with the Taj as Oscar Wilde was with the Atlantic Ocean. I cannot ascend to these heights. To me the Taj is one of the loveliest buildings in the world and the perfect tribute to a beautiful woman. It is undoubtedly feminine, but in that entirely appropriate sense; and if the exquisite decoration which is lavished on the white marble of the Mausoleum is, as someone has objected, more suited to a bridal chamber than a tomb, that also, we may reasonably suppose to have been Shah Jehan's intention. But the Taj is not merely this one building; it is a group of buildings set in a great formal garden of fascinating design and rare beauty. There are the mosques on either side of the central Mausoleum, the pavilions in the side-alleys, the vast entrance gate, and the long marble tank which leads from the gate to the main building, with its levels so cunningly broken as to get the utmost effect out of the reflections. I have spent scores of hours in this garden, and the beauty and cunningness of the whole design, and the charm of its varying aspects at morning, noon, evening and moonlight have more and more sunk into me. Then there is the incomparable view from the other side of the Jumna in which the entire group is seen fronting the river with the numerous domes and minarets grouped in their right relation.

The hasty traveller may not see these things and rush away with a superficial impression of dazzle and glitter. But Moghul architecture is not to be judged by the Taj alone. Take in Fatephur Sikri, Sekundra, the Fort at Agra, the great Mosque and Fort at Delhi and the twenty miles of tombs and deserted cities between Delhi and the Kutab, and you may begin to judge of its variety and capacity. There are great buildings with massive walls and bastions, and exquisite little structures inlaid like jewel-boxes; the builders employ brick, stone, or marble with equal facility, and make extraordinary patterns of plaster and looking-glass to decorate a ceiling. Hindu architecture with its loaded decoration and perplexing allegories is much more alien to the Western eye and cannot be rightly judged by the traveller in Central or Northern India. But all over the country there are strange and interesting buildings unnoticed in guide-books, and there is scarcely any town or large village in which you may not discover an ancient fort, temple, or mosque, or find beautiful old houses with overhanging carved windows in the bazaars.

From the end of October to the middle of March the climate of Northern India is as near perfect as climate can be; the sun is brilliant without being too hot, the nights are cool and crisp, and there is very little wind. After mid-March there is a general and rather rapid stoking up, and by the end of the month, if you happen to be in the plains, you will begin to learn what your fellow-beings who live in India and don't go to the hills, have to endure for five months in the year. The one drawback to travel is the indifference of the hotels, except in the few show places, but that is made up for by an unbounded hospitality. We stayed with the Readings at Delhi, with the Lyttons at Calcutta, with the Haileys at Lahore, with Rabindranath Tagore at Santinekatan, with the Jam Sahib at Jamnagar, and with other friends at Meerut and at Ahmedabad, where I saw and interviewed the great Mahatma Gandhi. At the end one had the guilty sense of taking everything and giving nothing; but it was a special pleasure to be with the Readings, who were old friends, during their last month in India, and to be able to judge for ourselves of the affection in which they were held by Indian and European at the end of a very anxious and difficult Viceroyalty.

CHAPTER XXVIII

IN EAST AND WEST

To Turkey by Sea—An S.O.S.—Angora and Mosul—An Argument with the Turks—Constantinople and Robert College—America and the Washington Conference—Impressions of American Politics—The Unexplored Background—Unity and Variety—Briand's Speech at the Conference and Its Effect—Balfour's Contribution—A Talk with Henry James—Thoughts about the Future—A Canadian Memory.

I

A VISIT to Turkey was part of our winter journey in 1925–26, and we spent the first three weeks of December in that country. We took the sea route from Trieste to Constantinople in an Italian ship of about 3,000 tons, and between Athens and Constantinople ran into the worst storm I have ever been in at sea. For thirty hours we battled with tremendous seas in a snow blizzard which made it impossible to see more than a few yards ahead. About midnight our captain picked up an S.O.S. from a ship (hundreds of miles away in the Adriatic) in which he had every reason to think his own wife was travelling. Grand Guignol never invented a grimmer tale, and sympathy with the unhappy man fighting the tumult with this cry coming to him out of the night carried us through our own anxieties. His wife, as it turned out, was safe; and whether he had done well to drive through the storm in that island-infested sea, instead of running to shelter, as most other ships did, became afterwards a lively subject of controversy among sea captains. We who knew the facts held him excused, and signed a round robin to him for the skill and courage of his navigation. Let me add that in fine weather there could be no more enchanting voyage than from Trieste to Constantinople. The approach to

Athens, up the Gulf of Corinth, through the Corinth Canal and across the Bay of Salamis, is a flashing vision of wine-dark seas and glorious mountains, scenes beautiful and historic crowded into a day's journey. On our subsequent voyage from Constantinople to Alexandria we saw the Dardanelles by daylight, visited Smyrna and looked on that scene of desolation. It was indeed appalling, but the golden sunshine and the beauty of the incomparable Gulf are what I chiefly remember.

My principal object in going to Turkey, in December, 1925, was to be at Angora when the decision of the League of Nations on the Mosul dispute was delivered. There was something like a panic on that subject, and a large number of those who professed to be best informed were convinced that if Mosul were awarded to us, the Turks would seize it—for it was then practically undefended—and defy us to turn them out. On reaching Athens I found that Greek residents in Constantinople were coming in large numbers by every ship "to spend Christmas in Athens," having the not unreasonable apprehension that, if there were trouble, it would fall first upon them. Even before I left London, Greek friends of mine had begged me not to dream of going to Angora. To be in Constantinople at such a time, they said, was bad enough, but at Angora my retreat would be cut off, and to go there would be putting my head into a noose. When I reached Constantinople, I found the general opinion among British residents to be that the Turks were bluffing, but I was still warned of a certain risk that they might not be, or that they might bluff themselves over the edge. I was advised, on the whole, to postpone my visit until the Mosul decision had been given and digested. But this was to spoil the object of my journey, which was to be there when it was given, and, if the chance offered, to use any influence I might have to prevent trouble. So I betook myself to the Turks to whom I had introductions, and when they not only encouraged me to go but offered to make arrangements for my seeing Turkish Ministers and officials, I felt the way was clear.

I have described the sequel in "The Changing East," but a few general impressions may be given here. One would certainly not go to Angora for pleasure, and before I left it I gained a real respect for the fortitude with which Turkish Ministers and officials and deputies had turned their backs on Constantinople and consented to live in this place. There is a certain picturesqueness in the old town, which runs along a high volcanic ridge rising suddenly out of the Anatolian plateau, but with the exception of a few rather Teutonic-looking new buildings, the official town is ramshackle and squalid. For the first two days of my visit there was an unceasing deluge of tropical rain and the mud was ankle deep. The one and only inn was purely Oriental; except coffee and toast there was no food in it, and the window of my room looked out on the little square which was incidentally the place of execution. Fourteen men had been hanged there shortly before I came, and six were awaiting execution at an unknown hour. Fortunately I was spared the sight, but the thought of it a little disturbed my slumbers, and I opened my curtain in a rather gingerly way when I got up in the mornings. No one in the inn spoke anything but Turkish, and when I thought I had made it clear that I wanted some writing paper and ink, eight cups of black coffee were brought me on a tray. Jane Austen always goes with me on my travels, and I read "Emma" into the small hours in my little room and wondered what Mr. Woodhouse would have thought of Angora.

I saw Kemal Pasha drive through the streets, but I did not interview him. I was told towards the end of my visit that he would see me if I would stay a little longer, but since it was stipulated that I should not say I had seen him or repeat anything that he said, it seemed to me that I should gain nothing by waiting. But I did see Ministers and officials and deputies and certain other people who were supposed to be the special intimates of Kemal, and with them debated every phase of the Mosul question up to the moment when the critical Cabinet met to discuss the League decision. This, I may add, was not quite a random butting-in of the unauthorized journalist, for though I was acting as a journalist for the *Westminster Gazette*, I had taken some steps to find out that I should not be embarrassing the officially responsible people. They had encouraged me to go, provided I did not look to them to cover me if I got into difficulties, and they seemed to think that I could at least do no harm. The point was that I had been a sharp critic of some of the Colonial Secretary's proceedings at Geneva in the previous September, and was known to the Turks as such. I was, therefore, in a stronger position than most Englishmen to tell them that defiance of the League of Nations, after its decision had been given, would estrange any opinion that was sympathetic to them in England and involve them in desperate difficulties with other European nations. This I did to the best of my ability, while cabling home *en clair* a strong plea for conciliatory negotiations on the basis of the League's decision. I have no means of judging whether my arguments made any impression, but what seemed to tell most at the time was the warning that it was not advisable to give Signor Mussolini a legalized opportunity of occupying Smyrna.

II

The Turks were very anxious to impress upon me that their régime was legal and constitutional, and I sat in the Parliament House watching a debate conducted on the most decorous European model, until the smells from a cesspool, which seemed to be immediately under the floor of the Chamber, drove me into the open. I also interviewed the President of the Chamber and for half an hour we solemnly debated—he talking Turkish and I French with a Turkish-French interpreter as go-between—whether the Turkish Parliament followed the British or the French model in its handling of finance. Between the three of us the subject became extremely confused, and I felt as I did on another occasion when I had undertaken to explain the nature of cricket to a German in his own tongue. I think it was known to the President, as it was to me, that if the Turkish Parliament rejected a Budget, Kemal Pasha would want to know the reason why. His box with the gilt chair in it is, perhaps, the most impressive object in the Assembly, and I was told that, when he came he was attended by aides-de-camp who made his wishes known to the deputies on the floor below. An instance was cited to me in which a group of deputies had ignored these instructions, and my informant spoke of it with pride as proof of the high independence of the Turkish Assembly. But six months later Kemal made a swoop, and fifteen leading members of the Opposition—including, I fear, some to whom I was introduced—were hanged in Constantinople for complicity, or alleged complicity, in an attempt to assassinate him. By general admission it was not wise to oppose Kemal if you wished for length of days.

While we were in Constantinople the roving Commission of the "Terror," rather ironically called the "Committee of Independence," descended on our hotel bringing panic with it. It had just held a "bloody assize" somewhere on the coast of the Black Sea, and by all accounts had fed the gallows very liberally. A Turkish friend expressed the pious hope that it would be content with hanging an Armenian, but nobody knew, and it was uncomfortable to have to rub shoulders with it in the hotel. A silence fell on the city, and I took a hint to cancel some of my appointments and drop politics for sight-seeing. But it was a relief to get out of this atmosphere and spend a few days at the British Embassy, where the Ambassador (Ronald Lindsay) and his wife abounded in kindness and hospitality that was all the more welcome after the mud of Angora and the heat and semi-darkness of our rooms in the hotel. We were now free to go sight-seeing and took our fill of the splendid, squalid, fascinating, melancholy city of Constantinople.

We had other hosts, especially Dr. and Mrs. Gates, of Robert College, who took us in and nursed my wife, who had fallen sick while I was at Angora, with the utmost care and kindness. The College and the President's house stand high above the Bosphorus at the point—just beyond Bebek—where it turns sharply to the north on its way to the Black Sea. From it there is a charming prospect of ancient castles, old round towers, villas and palaces with cypresses in their gardens, little towns and villages either at the water's edge or running steeply down to it through a pleasant verdure. Nothing could be more peaceful or more delightful to the eye, and one would say that if anywhere there is a favoured spot it is this. I gathered, nevertheless, that, for the Gates's and their Staff, life in the previous twelve years had been full of trouble and anxiety. They had gone doggedly on with their work all through the war and the Dardanelles Expedition, though it was their serious belief and that of every American in Constantinople that if the Allies got through, the Turks would fire the city and massacre the Christian inhabitants. Difficulties were by no means over when the peace came, and it still needs a very intelligent diplomacy to maintain foreign teachers and schools against the intense nationalism of the new Turkey.

Dr. Gates asked me to speak to the boys of the College, and I found myself on a Sunday morning facing two or three hundred of them in the School Chapel. They were of a dozen nationalities, representing all the races, Christian and Moslem, which for generations have been cutting each other's throats in the Near East. They were well-behaved, intelligent, attractive-looking lads who lived together in perfect goodwill in spite of their differences in race and religion. Sermons do not come easily to me, but my thoughts went back to the devastation and misery I had seen in the countries from which they came and I discoursed for twenty minutes on the simple virtue of kindness between man and man.

III

I went to America to attend the Washington Conference in the autumn and winter of 1921, and spent about three months in the country. For the greater part of this time I was necessarily at Washington, and since I was writing two articles a day, one to cable back to the *Westminster*, the other for the *New York Evening Post*, I had little leisure to look about me. For the concentration of politics within a small area, there is no other city in the world to compare with Washington. The whole population consists of officials, diplomats, congressmen and those who cater for them and wait on them. It is a charming city and will some day be a magnificent one. Nowhere can one see so much ingenious and pleasing modern architecture, and if its parks could be handed over to a select committee of English and Scottish gardeners they would beat most in Europe. Undoubtedly the official city gives the town-planner a unique opportunity, but there is another aspect of it which sets an Englishman thinking, when he is in Washington. Politicians in all countries are a peculiar people, and whether they gain or lose by being thrown back on each other's society, without the distracting and correcting influences of the common life, is not altogether certain.

The Washington Conference was admirably managed, and the impression left on me was of something extraordinarily unlike the European notion of how things are done in America. There was no hustling; secrets were well kept—until he rose in the plenary Conference on the first day no one had the least idea what Mr. Secretary Hughes was going to say—American statesmen when they spoke were quiet and business-like; the newspapers were full of long and serious articles on different phases of foreign affairs; the hospitality, though lavish, was quiet and decorous. I shook hands with President Harding and had interesting talks with Hughes, Elihu Root and a good many other American politicians. To see them on their own ground and to hear their comments day by day on the course of the Conference and the attitude of the Europeans, was to get an insight into the American point of view which no European could evolve from his inner consciousness or pick up from casual conversations with Americans in Europe. What struck one chiefly was the extreme cautiousness of American politicians. Neither Republicans nor Democrats were ready to take the risks that are commonly taken by British parties. Both seemed to be living in a state of doubt as to what the great mass of Americans, especially in the west and middle-west, were saying and thinking; and to give these people a lead seemed a dangerous adventure to all wise men. Parties, I was assured, had to be absolutely sure of their ground before they committed themselves to novel opinions on any subject, and especially on subjects touching American relations with Europe.

This sense of a vast unexplored world of opinion seemed to hang over Washington, and one felt it to be something different from the doubts and perplexities of politicians in Europe. It was not merely that politicians in America, as elsewhere, were waiting for a sign; it was that serious and responsible men had a real apprehension of setting forces in motion which might have incalculable results among the millions of many races spread over the American continent. The English or French politician can tell within limits how John Bull or Jacques Bonhomme will respond to a given appeal, but no one in Washington seemed to be at all certain what brother Jonathan would say to any initiative starting from the Eastern States; and not to make rash experiments with him appeared to be an instinctive first principle with both parties. At first I felt oppressed with the seeming lifelessness of American politics compared with our own—its rigid mechanism and lack of the vivid and adventurous elements one looks for in Europe—but a very little moving about even in the Eastern States made one realize, as one cannot in Europe, the extraordinary difference of the American conditions. One cannot be even a few months in America or wander freely in any American city, especially New York, without a growing sense of wonder at the achievement which has made a unity of its immense variety. Looking at it, one understood better Wilson's difficulties in the first two years of the war, and the extreme reluctance of the leaders of opinion then and since to launch new and possibly explosive ideas upon unexplored ground.

M. Briand has done such splendid work in subsequent years in the cause of international appeasement that it may seem churlish to dwell on any mistake in his previous career. Yet if the Washington Conference is to be understood, it must be put on record that he—no doubt unwillingly and unwittingly—destroyed the hopes, which ran high after the first plenary Conference, of bringing America back into the European fold. Hughes's speech and Balfour's prompt response at the first Session had had an enormous success, and a day or two later the journalists were informed "through the usual channel" that President Harding contemplated a continuing series of Conferences embracing, first, land armaments, and then economic questions, including, as we were encouraged to assume, international debts. Then, at the second Session, came Briand with a speech which acted as an ice-cold douche on all these plans. He seemed to argue—or, at all events, this was the logical conclusion of his argument

—that there could be no security for France while Germany lived and grew in population. Her disarmament was no security. She had millions of men trained to arms in the late war and a rapidly increasing population, which would be a potential fighting force far superior to that at the disposal of France. Every German man was a potential soldier, every German workshop a potential munition factory. France, therefore, had gone to the utmost limits in reducing her army after the war, and she could not afford to sacrifice a single battalion of her present strength. As an oratorical performance this speech was extremely effective, as an act of statesmanship it was disastrous.

I met "Pertinax" as we came out of the building, and he was glowing with enthusiasm. With him was Pierre Millet —an old friend whose early death, two years later, was a heavy loss to his own country and ours—and he, with his knowledge of British and American feeling, did not at all share his companion's elation. He knew, I think, that a very bad day's work had been done, and cast about for ways of softening the impression which he knew would be made. The American Press was civil to all the delegates, and especially to the French, and said little at the time, but the comments behind the scenes were loud and angry. Serious people said straight out that the whole Harding policy of "continuing Conferences" had been shattered by this speech. It was noticed particularly that Briand had not even glanced at the possibility of a reconciliation between France and Germany, and had spoken as if an eternal and unappeasable feud between the two was written in the book of fate. If so, said these Americans, thank God for the three thousand miles of stormy Atlantic which divide Europe from America. Had Briand only been able to make one of his subsequent "Locarno" speeches at this Conference, the whole subsequent history might have been different.

Great stress has been laid on the battleship agreement and the "Pact of the Pacific" which resulted from the Conference. These were achievements which I would not for a moment belittle, but nobody could have been present at Washington at this time without becoming aware that an even greater opportunity was being thrown away. The Republican party were not at all easy in their consciences about the attitude they had taken up since the war. They felt, as everybody felt, that the reaction from Wilsonism had gone much too far, and Harding, I think, had them with him in his attempt to feel his way back to regular and helpful relations with Europe. But Briand's speech first, and later the French attitude on the submarine question, drove opinion the other way, and left the men in the street saying that Europe was incurable and had better be left to her own devices. Certainly the hardening on the debt question dated from this time, for the idealists who had pleaded for indulgence now began to say that remission of debts would merely release more money to be squandered on armaments in Europe, and that all claims had better be kept alive and used as a lever to bring European war-makers to a saner frame of mind.

A few days after Briand's speech, my wife and I lunched with Jusserand, then French Ambassador in Washington. We were alone, and had a long and serious talk about the situation in which I pleaded for some mitigation of the French attitude. I got no satisfaction from him. He said that Englishmen were incapable of understanding the terrible impression made on the French mind by the devastation which the Germans had wrought in France, and Frenchmen would be betraying their duty if they relied on any spurious reconciliation. The one thing, in his view, was to tell the truth to the Americans, and he relied on the historical friendship between the United States and France to produce the right result. One was always coming across this "historical friendship" in Washington, and in virtue of it Frenchmen claimed to be more intimate with the American Government than we were and to know its mind far better than we did. I am afraid there has been some disillusionment on that subject since, and it seemed to me at the time that the French had not the smallest idea of the extent to which they were estranging the historical friend by their attitude at the Conference.

As the principal British delegate, Balfour did his work with his usual skill. He exactly conformed to the American idea of a British statesman, that is, he was in almost all respects the exact opposite of what they expect their own statesmen to be. His elegance, his detached but always affable manner, his air of wishing to be informed, when everybody else was streaming with information, his habit of improvising and hesitating, and seemingly complete innocence of all professional ways, captivated the whole tribe of professional politicians. I was one of a small party of guests deputed to go with him to the great banquet given to him in New York, and I confess I trembled a little when, after a remarkably effective and word-perfect oration from the chairman (Davis, lately Ambassador in London, and afterwards Democratic candidate for the Presidency), he opened in his seemingly unprepared manner, feeling about for words and syntax, hesitating and correcting as if he were on the front bench of the House of Commons. Would he ever get into his stride, and, if he did not, what sort of impression would he make? Apprehension, as I soon found, was quite unnecessary. This was what they wanted and expected from him, so English, so distinguished, as my neighbour said. They praised his voice, his demeanour, the modesty of his approach, and presently he gripped them and carried them along with him to a triumphant conclusion. Seldom does one see things quite true to type, but in Washington, Balfour was exactly what the best kind of Englishman is expected to be, and the Americans were what we expected the best kind of Americans to be. Seeing the group of very able Americans who were then assembled at Washington, helped one to understand how America is made safe for democracy in spite of the rather discouraging appearance of her political machine and ward politicians.

IV

Soon after I returned from my visit to India in 1912, I met Henry James, who had just returned from a visit to America after forty years' absence. He instantly plunged into a comparison of what must have been my feelings on seeing India with his own feelings on seeing America. The theme in his hands took on an extraordinary complexity, and I found it difficult to believe that, let alone my supposed feelings at seeing India, anything in the world could have suggested such intricate and bewildering ideas as America appeared to have put into the mind of Henry James. But I understood it better after being in the country a few weeks; and I came away with a strong feeling that hardly any question one could ask about America admitted of a simple answer. It was European undoubtedly, but Europe in a kaleidoscope, making new and strange patterns in which different racial elements came uppermost in succession. What sort of mixture these various elements would make at any given moment seemed unpredictable to the wisest; and whether in the meantime the different races might not transfer their estrangements and animosities from their homelands to their country of adoption was evidently an anxious question on which all American statesmen kept their eye in their dealings with Europe. I have felt ever since that any wooing of America by Englishmen on the merely sentimental ground of kinship and cousinship must defeat itself, and that the nations which ask least of her and best understand her difficulties are most likely to win her approval.

Undoubtedly in America the European grows hungry for the ancient familiar things of his own continent, and through their absence learns perhaps for the first time what they really mean to him. But in compensation he gets the sense of something new and very exciting. Almost everything in America stirs one to think of the future, just as almost everything in Europe stirs one to think of the past. One wonders all the time what is in the making, and one finds its people engaged in an unceasing experiment, scrapping and being scrapped, rooted in nothing, moving on from one occupation to another, with a quickness and mobility which one looks for in vain in old countries. To the frugal European eye there is a grand prodigality in the unceasing exchange of old lamps for new, which goes on in America; and sometimes it occurs to one that even Americans might achieve more with less hustle and friction. But there is none of the travailing and groaning which attend creation in Europe.

We wound up this journey with a flying visit to Ontario, where old friends entertained us in the town of London. Canadian hospitality knows no bounds, and I felt ashamed at the poor return I made for it in the speeches which I was invited to make at public dinners and luncheons. The eagerness and receptiveness of these audiences in new countries deserve the very best that a speaker can give them, and in the hurry of travel it is so difficult to give more than the second best. Most of all I felt humbled when called upon to speak to children assembled in the schools, as happened to me three times in one morning. They were beautiful schools, and the children made a vivid impression of youth, high spirits and brimming curiosity. On the spur of the moment I did my best, but often since I have thought of the lost opportunities of that morning. One rare pleasure we had in these days. My wife had had six hundred Canadian patients in her hospital during the war, and some of them had come from this neighbourhood. Remembering this, the ladies of London, Ontario, organized a special reception for her and spoke with warm gratitude of what she had done for the Canadian lads. Those of them who lie in the churchyard at Tankerton were not forgotten.

We spent five or six hours at Niagara on the way back, and saw the falls against a snow background on a brilliant winter day. No photograph or picture of this famous scene comes near the reality as we saw it that day; and I have an abiding memory of blue-green waters plunging into an amber mist with rainbows flashing in the heart of it. Turner in his later period might have conveyed something of its mystery and beauty, but the lovely iridescence of it is beyond painting.

CHAPTER XXIX

A ROYAL COMMISSION

A Discouraging Record—Lord Gorell and the Divorce Commission—The Evidence—The Attitude of the Minority—An Agitated Debate—The Question of Reporting—A Rejected Solution—The Equality of the Sexes—The Archbishop of York's Part—Preparing the Majority Report.

I

IN the course of my life I have spent a great many hours on Public Committees, Royal Commissions, Departmental Inquiries and so forth, and if I had to record the results in positive terms, I should have to set them down as nil. Just as I have never succeeded in voting for a winning candidate for Parliament, so I have never succeeded in inducing any Government to take my advice, or that which I have tendered in common with my colleagues on these occasions. In 1907–8 I spent many laborious hours on a Departmental Committee of the Board of Trade on the subject of Railways and Traders, and that came to nothing. In 1911–12 I spent many more hours on the Royal Commission on the Marriage Laws and, so far, very little has come of that. In 1913 and 1914 I did a great deal of hard work for Mr. Lloyd George's Land Committee, and the war made an end of anything that might have come of that. In 1919 and 1920, as already recorded, I went to Egypt as a member of the Milner Mission, and Lloyd George's Government made short work of the unanimous Report of that body. This record is scarcely an encouraging one for journalists who step outside their province; and the best that can be said of most of these activities is that they may in some measure have helped to educate opinion and that they afforded me useful and interesting experience, sometimes at the public expense.

Much of this part of my story is dead beyond resurrection, but I may, perhaps, say something about the Divorce Commission of 1911–12; for one cannot abandon the hope that some Government may yet pluck up courage to withstand the minority which blocks the reform of the marriage laws. Hearing the evidence convinced me that this is a matter of the greatest social importance, and not at all, as some people still suppose, the mere agitation of well-to-do persons suffering from the "hard cases" of a law which is for the general well-being.

It was, in every sense of the word, Lord Gorell's Commission. *He* was chairman, *he* inspired it, *he* brought to it the weight of learning and experience which made the Majority Report an exhaustive classic of the subject. His long experience as President of the Divorce Court had left him with a deep conviction that wrongs were being inflicted on innocent people for which there ought to be a remedy, and that the marriage law was being brought into discredit by the collusive evasion of it which was open to the rich, but not to the poor. He literally worked himself to death over the Commission, and after two years of it was a broken man. I retain the greatest admiration and affection for him. To see him at work was to see the finest legal mind under the inspiration of a real passion for social justice. He was thinking not of the fashionable petitioners and respondents whose scandals made spicy reading for the newspapers, but of the large numbers of poor people driven to lifelong judicial separations or irregular connexions for lack of the relief which, in his view, the law ought to give them.

As one heard the evidence on this subject, evidence coming from all parts of the country, from magistrates, police officials and social workers who could not be suspected of lax views on the moral question, one hoped that it might break down the ecclesiastical opposition. It was manifest that the judicial separation which was the poor man or woman's only remedy, could not enforce the lifelong celibacy which was its apparent intention, and that it very seldom resulted in the reconciliations to which it was supposed to hold the door open. It was so inevitable in the circumstances in which the great majority of people live that the man left with a family should find a helpmeet, and that she should be a wife to him in all but the name. It was so unfair that the woman should be chained for life to a drunken, criminal, or dissolute husband and left to fight single-handed to bring up a family. These were not merely hard cases; they were the inevitable casualties of the institution of marriage, and in the aggregate they imposed a vast deal of suffering which, if our witnesses told the truth, was bringing marriage into disrepute. For people brought their own judgment to bear on each case according to its merits, and would not regard as "living in sin" those whom they considered to be innocent victims of circumstances beyond their control.

But all this evidence seemed to make no impression on the minority. Their minds were made up that they would have no new causes of divorce. Gorell put himself to immense pains to study every part of scripture that could by any stretch be brought to bear on this question, and, backed by Lady Frances Balfour, Lord Guthrie and, on occasions, myself, endeavoured to shake the clerical and Anglican witnesses. Day after day we debated scripture texts supposed to be the basis of the marriage law, and tried to show that the narrow construction put on some of these was contrary to the spirit of the Master, to say nothing of a wise Christian policy in the modern world. We made no impression. It was not, as we found, the texts, but the interpretation put upon them by the Churches, the "Catholic tradition," the decisions of ecclesiastical authority, which weighed with our opponents, and seemed to hold them bound against all concessions. To them our doctrine was not a thing which could be debated by Royal Commissions or Parliament; it was simply heresy. We tried to take them on that ground, and urged that no one wished to prevent them from applying their own view to themselves or making it part of the discipline of their Churches; we only objected when they tried to enforce this view through Parliament on other people who were not members of their Churches and did not share their views. But this, too, failed, for they said they had a duty to see that the Christian view of marriage was applied to the whole community.

II

So from the beginning we were divided into two parties, and Gorell's hope of a unanimous Report was defeated. We had some agitated debates, especially one on a proposal, thrown out in the hope of placating the minority, that the respondent in a divorce case should not be allowed to marry the co-respondent. I felt so strongly about this that I said on the spur of the moment, and I am afraid with some heat, that I should not only dissent from such a proposal, but that I should refuse to sign any Report that contained it. I went on to argue that the common opinion which held that the marriage of respondent and co-respondent was the one way to repair a wrong, was humane and right, and that it must be inhuman and wrong, while permitting them to marry other persons, to cut them off from the one marriage in which the presumption was that their affections were engaged. I painted in somewhat high colours the picture of a man betraying a married woman and leaving her in the lurch. It seemed to me that these efforts to conciliate would lead us into a position which would be as repugnant to common feeling as any of the tabus of our opponents. Sir Frederick Treves warmly supported me and said that he should follow my example if this proposal were persisted in. That day's sitting ended in some confusion, and I find in my records the copy of a letter which I addressed to Gorell the next day, saying that in all the circumstances I might cause him least embarrassment if I withdrew from the Commission. For we were at deadlock upon another matter, the question of newspaper reports, upon which, as the one journalist member of the Commission, I had a special responsibility. My colleagues seemed at that moment to be united on the closing of the Courts to the Press, but that, as it turned out, was only a passing phase. Gorell begged me to continue, intimated that the proposal about the "guilty parties" would not be pursued and that full opportunity would be given for further discussion of the question of reporting.

That is by no means the simple question that some people suppose it to be. In fact, it cuts deep into the whole theory of divorce. When we started our debate again, I produced a passage from one of Bernard Shaw's Prefaces, in which he argued that marriage and divorce was a private affair of the parties in which the public and the newspapers should not intrude, and I pointed out that the theory of marriage as a contract "in the sight of God and in the face of this Congregation" in which the public were vitally concerned, required publicity; and that the Court could not be closed without inferentially adopting the view of marriage which regarded it as a private affair of the parties. The minority had scarcely thought of this logic of the matter, and the argument, I think, had some weight. At all events we agreed that a simple closing of the Court to the newspapers was an impossibility, so long as the marriage law stood on its present footing and divorce was held to be a matter concerning the public as well as the parties. But we could agree upon nothing else. A careful analysis of reports in the Sunday and daily Press showed that the Divorce Court was responsible for only a part of the daily and weekly outpouring of sewage upon the newspaper reader; and it seemed probable that, if we closed the Divorce Court, we should merely divert the sewage-farmers to other sources of an always abundant supply. Unquestionably the facts revealed in our analysis were a scandal and a nuisance to decent people, but to devise any way of dealing with them was extraordinarily difficult. So far as I remember, we discussed all the plans that have recently been broached, but all seemed open to serious objection, and not least the plan, which is embodied in a recent piece of legislation, of confining the reports to the summing-up and verdict. To make the summing-up serve the double purpose of a decorous report to the public and a judicial charge to the jury, to throw on the judge the onus of deciding which of the parties should be pilloried and to what extent, and to compel him at each stage to consider whether the plain-speaking that might be necessary to the jury would be suitable reading for the public, seemed to me, and seems to me still, repugnant to legal principles, to say nothing of the suspicions to which the judges may be exposed in performing so very delicate and invidious a task.

My own solution, embodied in a memorandum attached to the Majority Report, was to prevent all reporting of divorce cases until they are concluded. This, I should add, has found favour with no one, and I can claim no professional support for it. But I still believe that it would solve a large part of the problem, and that it may even yet prove an acceptable alternative to the plan now adopted. It would prevent the serializing and sensationalizing from day to day, which is the chief evil of unqualified publicity; it would limit the length of reports from sheer lack of space on a given day; it would make going back for salacious detail a rather flagrantly scandalous proceeding and enlist the *vis inertiæ* on the side of decency. It would leave the newspapers to judge of the degree in which the penalty of publicity should be inflicted on the parties instead of throwing that very invidious task upon the judge. I may add that I should like to give judges a discretion to postpone reporting until the end of the trial not only in divorce cases, but in all cases, civil or criminal, in which publicity is liable to be abused. There are journalists who consider that any discipline of this kind is an invasion of the liberties of the Press, and who hold out for an unfettered discretion to give the public what it wants, as measured by the results in circulation. I feel sure that this is a mistaken view, and that blind resistance to all discipline accompanied by manifest abuse of liberty on the part of a section of the Press will one day lead to a reaction which may seriously threaten the salutary principle of the open law-court. I confess I had much difficulty in palliating to my colleagues the steady refusal of the greater part of the Press to admit that the problem was a serious one or to assist the Commission by offering evidence about the means of solving it.

III

Majority and minority worked amicably together until the breaking point, which came on the proposed new causes of divorce (desertion, cruelty, habitual drunkenness, long terms of penal servitude, insanity), and then we each set about preparing our own Reports. The minority, while holding tenaciously to their principle which barred the new causes, were otherwise moderate and helpful. They accepted the Act of 1857 and were prepared for anything which made its administration fairer or more even between rich and poor. A few clerical witnesses took the line that they considered divorce to be such an evil and so repugnant to the law of God that they were opposed to any reforms which would bring it within reach of larger numbers. To these the cost and difficulty of obtaining divorce, and the anomalies of the law, seemed like providential dispensations for the defence of marriage, and what we called reform they considered to be the opening of wider doors to wickedness. The minority did not take this view; they were wisely and carefully led by the Archbishop of York, and professed themselves as anxious as we were to remove injustices or anomalies in the working of the principles accepted in 1857. The test came in the proposal to equalize the conditions between the sexes. I had expected long debates and deep divisions of opinions on this subject. It raised no new principle for Churchmen, but it was likely to lead to more new divorces than all the proposed new causes put together, and if to avoid the increase of divorces was *per se* a good thing, the stand would have to be made here if anywhere. Fortunately the minority took the view that, divorce having once been permitted on the ground of adultery, discrimination between the sexes inflicted an injustice which could not be defended. That settled the question, so far as the Commission was concerned. The various man-of-the-world objections simply would not bear statement, when we came up to them; and the legal view that it was necessary to deter women from foisting illegitimate children on their own families, led logically to the conclusion that it was equally necessary to deter men from foisting them on other people's families. As I remember it, argument on this question, on which we had expected the sharpest divisions, evaporated from the sheer impossibility of stating an arguable case against equality, and we found ourselves absolutely unanimous.

It was one of the pleasures of this work to renew intimacy with my old Balliol friend, the Archbishop of York. He and I had gone different ways since we left Oxford, but we met again on the old footing and talked on more congenial subjects than the marriage laws in the intervals for lunch. Lang had had a lawyer's training before he took orders in the Church of England, and he brought an acute legal mind to the problems of the Commission. Now and again when majority and minority had parted company, he came and sat with the majority and gave them excellent and impartial advice as to the least objectionable way of applying their views, assuming these to be unalterable. Sitting on this Commission was, I imagine, an extremely difficult and delicate business for an Archbishop, and the rest of us were of opinion that Lang could scarcely have acquitted himself better.

Gorell wrote the whole of the first draft of the Majority Report, and I am, therefore, free to pay my tribute to its masterly statement of law and fact and comprehensive grasp of the whole subject. Some of us were of opinion that the phraseology of this draft was in places too technical, and we thought it would be a gain if it could be somewhat simplified and, as far as possible, purged of blue-book English. I spent many hours on this effort, and Lady Frances Balfour and Mrs. Tennant did the same. We met and pooled our ideas and, having written them into my draft, I went in some trepidation and submitted them to Gorell. He was rightly anxious lest his meaning should have been distorted or legal mistakes have crept into our revised versions, but in all other respects he met us with the greatest good humour and modesty. In one of these inquests on the style of the Report I was able to ease the situation by confessing my own infirmities in the use of the English language and showing him a letter from my father, who claimed to have discovered no less than forty mistakes of punctuation and syntax in a short volume of Essays I had lately published.

Shortly after the Welsh Disestablishment Bill was introduced, Morley said to me one day that the "old lady"—by which he meant the Church of England—"still had a few kicks in her," and that our shins would be pretty sore before we had done with that business. The "old lady," as it turned out, had a good many kicks to spare for the Majority Report of the Divorce Commission, and she has successfully prevented the adoption of the greater part of it. A comparatively small minority prepared on a given issue to transfer its votes from party to party has a unique power of intimidating Governments; and neither Liberal, Coalition, nor Labour Governments have been willing to touch the question, in face of the little group of Roman and Anglican Catholics cutting across parties which has threatened secession on it. Marriage law reform is, therefore, in much the same position as, say, woman suffrage in the days before the war, and the sufferers from the present state of the law are not likely to come into the open and proclaim their woes, as did the suffragettes. Yet I think it is still for these opponents to consider whether they are really maintaining the sanctity of marriage by clinging to a law which insists on a lifelong formal tie between partners who are, in fact, separated, which refuses relief to the deserted wife or husband, and leaves either without remedy for the incurable intemperance, insanity, or criminality of the other. The privacy now assured to divorce proceedings in the Courts has still further eased the position for the well-to-do, while that part of the law which is especially a hardship to the poor remains unreformed. The least that can be asked is that judicial separations, after they have run for a certain period, should automatically be converted into divorces. We are in face of a younger generation which does not easily accept the traditions of Churches or the wisdom of the elders, when these seem to be out of touch with the common morality, and it may find ways of reforming the marriage law which will be extremely disconcerting to the elders.

CHAPTER XXX

THE HISTORY OF A NEWSPAPER

The Evening Press in London—Its Former and Present Position—The Old Penny Evenings—Their Circulation and Their Influence—Efforts to Balance Accounts—Disinterested Proprietors.

I

WHAT has happened to the Press in our time, and why has it happened? Volumes have been written on that subject, and I myself have devoted several chapters to it in another book. Here I will confine myself to my own experience in the field of London evening journalism.

Before the war there were four penny and two halfpenny evening papers in London, and a well marked line divided the penny from the halfpenny. The former catered for the supposedly educated classes; the latter appealed to the multitude and made a speciality of sporting news. At the end of the war the difference in price was obliterated; the pennies which had gone up to twopence returned to a penny, and the halfpennies which had gone up to a penny remained there. All the commercial advantages now fell to those which showed the largest circulations, and the life of the others became increasingly difficult and finally impossible. Of the original penny papers, the *Westminster Gazette* has been converted into a morning paper, the *Pall Mall Gazette* and the *Globe* have ceased publication, and the *Evening Standard* circulates in the same wide field as its penny contemporaries, the *Evening News* and the *Star*. London, therefore, now has only three evening papers approximately of the same type, whereas before the war it had six—and at a still earlier date eight*—

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* In addition to the papers above mentioned there were also the *Echo* and the *Sun.*

of varying types. Much the same process has been at work in New York, and probably for the same reasons.

This is a phase in the history of journalism which is of great importance, for it raises the question whether, or how far, the journalism of opinion can survive under modern conditions. Perhaps I may throw a little light on that question if I try to tell truthfully what happened to the evening *Westminster Gazette.*

The point about the old evening penny paper, of which it was a leading example, was that it was first of all and very deliberately an "organ of opinion." It put its leading article on its front page, it made politics its chief concern, and laid itself out to convert and persuade by its writing. Its readers bought it quite as much for its views as for its news. Before the war, and for nearly forty years earlier, either of the great political parties would have thought it a serious loss not to be represented by at least one paper of this kind. For such papers caught the politicians when they were assembled in the House of Commons, and gave the serious reader something to think about in his leisure hours—in the clubs when his working day was over, and at home in the evenings.

But to catch this kind of reader it was necessary to abjure what is called the popular appeal and to write for him and for him alone. The appeal, therefore, was deliberately to the few. The trouble was that they were so very few, as newspapers reckon numbers. One hardly dare mention the facts in the hearing of the modern master of circulation, for they will seem derisory. I cannot verify them all, but something of this kind is the approximate truth. The original *Pall Mall Gazette*, started by George Smith and edited by Frederick Greenwood, had at the beginning of its existence a circulation of about 4,000 a night, at its then price of twopence. Under the influence of a very mild sensation—a series of articles by James Greenwood on a night spent in a casual ward—it about doubled this number and gradually ran up to about 9,000. Under John Morley's editorship it reached about 10,000. Under Stead it rose to about 13,000, with a sudden rise for the period of the "Maiden Tribute" and a serious reaction afterwards. E. T. Cook, who succeeded Stead, kept it up to 13,000, and when the *Westminster* was established to carry on the same tradition, it started at about this level and remained there for the next three years. In the following years there was a slight annual increase, until the Boer War, when it jumped to 25,000 a day. After the Boer War it fell back to about 20,000, and rose again to about 27,000 during the Great War. I am speaking of actual sales, minus "returns."

Judged by the standards of the popular Press, these figures look ridiculous. Yet it will scarcely be denied that Greenwood and Morley were editors of great influence and that Stead filled the whole country with the sound of his voice. How did they do it? The answer is that they were appealing to a select audience of politically instructed readers, who in those days were the makers of opinion, and from whom an immense influence radiated outwards to the multitude. The Minister, the M.P., the banker, and the business man all read them with serious attention. And, above all, the journalists read them and founded other articles on what they wrote. There could have been no better audience for the purpose of what is now called propaganda, and the writers who addressed it had a direct influence which they could not possibly have had, if they had been speaking to the multitude.

Considered in this way, the figures were by no means so discouraging as they looked. If one took the London Blue Book or Red Book—the directories which were supposed to contain the names of the educated and fairly well-off—one found that they contained from 40,000 to 50,000 names. This was the chief part of the possible circulation of the newspaper of opinion in London, and about the same number as was obtained *in London* by morning papers of the same character. Outside of these were serious politicians in all classes; workmen, shopkeepers, earnest young people attending evening classes and schools, very important people but, as newspapers judge circulation, numerically insignificant, and hard to reach without an extensive apparatus of distribution. They were in little pockets all over London and the country, and could only be supplied by multiplying carts and running the risk of large numbers of unsold copies. So long as this kind of newspaper remained true to its type, its proprietors and editors had to resign themselves to the conclusion that there were in London only about 100,000 people of all parties and complexions who would buy it. Indeed, the Liberal proprietor and editor might consider himself fortunate if he reached 30,000 of these, and, in order to get them, he had to incur nearly the same costs in distribution as his neighbours, who were supplying ten or twenty times that number of papers to the larger public.

The difficulty was to resign oneself to these conditions and to work steadily within them. When our neighbours were so evidently expanding, it seemed tame and unenterprising not to try to do the same. But if we tried the kind of "stunt" which would have added 20,000 to 30,000 a day to the circulation of a popular newspaper, scarcely as many hundreds would be gathered in. The regular readers were not amused, and some of them would write to express a modest hope that the editor of their "favourite paper" would not misconduct himself in that way again. And if one caught a few of the others it was only for the night, and they fell off again the moment they discovered the chronic solemnity of the paper which had taken them unawares. All through the years I could hear the groans of the circulation manager from the room below mine. He was justly convinced that a different article from that which we were producing upstairs would appeal to a much larger public, and naturally felt that we were defeating his purpose in life by our long reviews and "heavy politics." He was quite right, but we were there to do what we were trying to do, and if something else was wanted, the first thing to be done was, as Fisher used to say, to "sack the lot" of us. Had we been put in charge of a really popular paper with an up-to-date circulation we could have been relied upon to kill it in about a fortnight.

II

And yet I will boldly claim that we were quite efficient at our own job. So much, at least, I owe to my colleagues, who were among the most zealous, the most distinterested, and the most loyal to their paper of any of the men who have worked together in Fleet Street in recent years. I like to think that nearly all who were there at the beginning were still there at the end, and that some of them have passed to the morning *Westminster*; and I know that many of them refused tempting offers to go elsewhere, from pride in the *Westminster* and a sense that its proprietors would not treat them capriciously or unfairly. For their sake even more than my own, it always irritated me to hear it said that the *Westminster* was not a good newspaper, and that it was bought for its articles and not for its news. This was not flattering to the editor, and I do not think it was true. I think it was simply due to the fact that we went to press with our last edition about half an hour earlier than most of our competitors, which was vexatious to journalists relying on the last editions of the evening papers for the very latest news, but of advantage to our kind of reader, who wanted papers delivered at his house by six o'clock. This was possibly an unwise economy, since the reputation of newspapers depends largely on journalists, but it was not the news staff which was at fault. For many years it was a regular part of my work to compare the last edition of the *Westminster* with the corresponding editions of its competitors. I seldom found an item of news omitted except for this cause; and for the presentment of serious news in a careful and intelligent way with a proper sense of perspective and value, I do not think the *Westminster* staff was easily beaten.

But as I write these words I am aware that they are incurably "highbrow." The *Westminster* did its news, as it did other things, for its own particular readers, and there were other readers to whom all its ways seemed flat and heavy. These others wanted the splash and the headline and the goods in the shop-window. To a certain extent we conformed to the fashions. We took the leader from the front page and put news in its place—result, as usual, a chorus of remonstrances from the faithful and no new adherents. The faithful specially hated the modern habit of breaking off at the bottom of a column on the front page and continuing in the undiscoverable middle of a column on another page. All the experts were agreed that this was one of the "notes" of a really enterprising paper; nearly all the faithful said that it was a detestable mystification. We could never train them to any of these novelties; they kicked all the way and said that if we gave them that sort of thing, they would give us up.

The *Westminster* had as large a number of readers to each copy sold as any paper in London, and in all probability it had about 100,000 readers per night. We hoped that, as the bulk of these were people of the kind that certain advertisers most want to get at, they would in time bring a sufficient advertisement-revenue to balance the deficiency in circulation. In this we were disappointed. There was a faithful group of advertisers who gave us a liberal share of their expenditure and told us that they got a good return on their outlay, but the majority went after the big circulations, and they must be presumed to have known their business best. Our maximum advertisement revenue was about £40,000 a year, and we wanted £60,000 to balance accounts and make a little profit. Publishers agreed that we were a good medium, but the small advertiser of situations vacant or wanted never came our way; the great display advertisements were reserved for the big morning sheets; the patent medicine vendors found us useless. So gradually we discovered that this way out of our difficulties was past hoping for. The advertisements did increase, but not so fast as the expenditure. The publication of their "net circulations" by the popular papers was gradually killing us.

In the thirty years of its existence, I suppose about £500,000 was spent on the evening *Westminster*. Newnes started with a capital expenditure of £100,000 or more, part of which was devoted to the equipment of a printing office which was afterwards detached from the paper. During the fifteen years that he was proprietor he was out of pocket in sums varying from £5,000 to £10,000 per annum. There were one or two years in which we almost balanced accounts, and I became hopeful that we were going to solve our problem. But then the competition became more severe, and the general level of expenditure rose and threw us back. To hold our own we had to give more pages and increase our costs all round. When the syndicate of which Sir Alfred Mond was chairman bought the paper from Newnes, we tried an arrangement for joint publishing with the *Chronicle*, but it did not diminish our losses, which for the next ten years varied between £10,000 and £15,000 a year. Then when prices soared at the end of the war these figures were largely increased. With paper at 6d. per lb., instead of 1d., the whole basis was shattered for the time being. By holding on we might have worked at a loss of about £20,000 a year, but by that time it was evident that a paper of the type of the *Westminster*, worked as a single enterprise, could not be profitable in the London area to which the evening newspaper is confined. The choice, then, was to stop it, to change it into a different type, or to go out into the larger field which is open to the morning paper. Lord Cowdray, who by this time had become chief proprietor, very courageously chose the third alternative.

III

Through all the thirty years the proprietors of the *Westminster* showed a more than Christian fortitude. When I was discouraged, they cheered me up, and from none of them have I ever had a word of complaint. In the last days of his proprietorship, Newnes was straining his fortunes in supporting the *Westminster*, but he never let me see it; he always told me that he took a pride in the paper and wished no change that would affect its character. All the others, and especially Cowdray, who was the largest shareholder, were of the same disposition. None of them looked for profit, or ever asked for any favour or advantage for themselves, such as rich men might be supposed to expect from a newspaper they financed. They were honestly and generously for the cause, and would have no lowering of the flag. It is not for me to say whether the effort was worth while, but I have no doubt at all that it was a generous and disinterested effort and that the men who made it deserve the credit due to public-spirited benefactors.

Is the problem, then, insoluble? Northcliffe, who always professed a high regard for the *Westminster*, used to say not. He told me more than once that, if he had it he would make it pay in six months and (he used to protest) without altering its character or its politics. I do not think this was an idle boast. He would have saved the expense of a separate office and distributed the paper through his existing and far more efficient machinery. He would have applied his army of canvassers to increasing its circulation; he would not have sat resignedly and called up a certain amount of capital to meet an expected loss, but spent freely for a few months or years in the hope of a future return. I believe it would be quite possible for the proprietors of one of the popular papers to run the newspaper of opinion in connexion with their great circulations and make it pay, but the question is whether they would resist the temptation of increasing circulation and profits by changing its character, until it became merely a duplicate of their other publications. I cannot answer the question, but it is difficult to believe that there will be no further experiment in this field. There were undoubtedly too many of the old type, and they partly killed each other by a feverish competition for a small public, but that there should not be room for even one in the greatest and most populous city in the world is a discouraging thought. I dream sometimes of a newspaper which shall boldly rely on quality rather than quantity of circulation and give its advertisers a guarantee that its numbers shall never exceed 100,000 per day.

My departure from the editorship when the *Westminster* became a morning paper was entirely my own act. The report that I had been ejected or displaced was wholly without foundation. When the change was made, the proprietors showed their usual forbearance and were willing to make everything easy for me, if I would continue in charge of the much larger venture which they now had in mind. In fact it was I who seemed to desert them, not they who wished to dispense with my services. It caused me much searching of heart, and when the change was made in November, 1921, I decided to go to Washington as special correspondent of the new morning paper at the Disarmament Conference, partly that I might have time to think over the situation quietly. My conclusion was that my experience on the old *Westminster* was no qualification for the editorship of a morning paper seeking a large circulation all over the country, and that, if I undertook it, I should be cut off from the greater part of the writing work for which I felt myself best qualified. This decision, was, I think, in the interests of the proprietors, but it is a pleasure to me to think that after thirty-four years I am still serving under the old flag, though another is on the bridge.

* * * * * *

As I finish this chapter, my eye catches the advertisement of a modern evening paper, which states that it is spending on one development a sum of money which, if invested at the present rate of interest, would have maintained the old evening *Westminster* during the whole period of its existence and have been intact at the end.

CHAPTER XXXI

AN EDITOR'S WORKS AND DAYS

Different Ways of Editing—Seeing Callers—Instructing an Editor—Inventors and their Schemes—The Highest Explosive in the World—The *Westminster* Competitions—Latin and Greek Verse—Miss Royde Smith and Her Team—Lord Curzon's Contributions—Beautiful Words—Reviewing and Reviewers—Theatrical Criticism and Its Difficulties—Criticism and Advertising—Cricket and Epithets.

I

THIS is a chapter of memories and reflections which come into my mind as I look back over the years spent in editing the old evening *Westminster*. They are without order or sequence, and some of them, I am afraid, may seem remote from present times.

I abhor what is commonly called editing, i.e. the cutting, trimming, and correcting of other people's writings to make them conform to one's own ideas. I dislike having it done to my own work, and I did as little as possible of it to other people's. Among the principal contributors to the evening *Westminster* were men who were eminent and distinguished as literary craftsmen and, forbearing as they were, I knew that they would greatly prefer their work to appear as they produced it than as improved by me. Even when cutting was peremptory, it seemed best to ask them to do it themselves, whenever possible, for more good articles are ruined by the unintelligent cutting of editors and sub-editors than readers are at all aware. Still more did this rule apply to captions and other embellishments. I did once, I remember, venture to put what are called "sub-heads" into an article by a distinguished woman writer which, though a masterpiece of its kind, did seem to me to need just that amount of relief to the reader. This brought me the deserved and expected rebuke on a post card from Italy : "What unspeakable office-boy has been laying his obscene paw on my writing?" Now and again I might alter a sentence or a phrase which seemed to me to be open to misconstruction or to say something else than the writer intended, but the writers had, I think, a reasonable certainty that their articles would appear as they wrote them.

In what then, it may be asked, does editing consist? The answer is, mainly in the choice of writers and of the subjects assigned to them. If a writer did not conform to the general spirit of the paper, it always seemed to me useless to try to subdue him to it. A newspaper, as it goes on, develops a kind of collective character which may in some ways be different from the character of those contributing to it, but which influences them all, if they are amenable to the influence. It is this character which the editor has to guard and cultivate, and he must be very careful that it is not broken or blurred by the intrusion of alien elements. Many times I have had intimations that certain distinguished writers would be willing to contribute to the *Westminster*, if I would invite them, and yet I have refrained from doing so, not because I failed to appreciate their work, but because I felt that they were not of our pattern and could not be bent to it. And for the same reason I have quietly dropped out very clever contributors who seemed to strike a jarring note. If explanations were asked for, they were frankly given, but more often they were not asked. It seemed to me fair to assume that a contributor had taken the trouble to study the paper to which he was sending his contributions, and that he would of his own accord try to make his contributions fit into its style and character. But a considerable number of would-be contributors seemed to send the same manuscript to half a dozen newspapers, regardless of whether it conformed to the character or even the known opinions of any one of them. It was always a relief to get a contribution marked for a certain place, of the right length for that place, and dealing with a subject which was already running. The contributors I cursed were those who invited me to shorten or correct their compositions.

II

A difficulty which specially besets the writing editor is that of finding time to see the callers who besiege a newspaper office. At the old *Pall Mall* offices, in Northumberland Street, Stead started seeing callers the moment after he had finished his leader, and went on seeing them till four in the afternoon. There was no one he would not see, especially no woman, and almost invariably he took at least one of his visitors off to lunch with him lest the flow of talk should cease for even one hour. All the cranks in the world must have passed through that office, but Stead delighted in cranks and they in him; and thanks to his capacity of dictating at incredible speed he could overtake his work at the end of the day. I found it impossible to follow his example, and had finally to limit myself, as a rule, to callers by appointment between a quarter past twelve and a quarter past one. I learnt in after years that I was much blamed for this, and perhaps justly, for a journalist, of all men, should be a patient listener. The pains that zealous people will take to instruct an editor deserve at least this reward. I can see them now, men and women, especially women, sitting opposite me, methodically opening bags and pouches, spreading out papers and proceeding to expound—first, second and thirdly, etc.—and leaving me finally with a mass of documents which I was to digest at my leisure. They came from all over the world, and now and again gave one extraordinarily interesting stuff, but life is short and the exponents of "causes" are generally very long. Often I begged for mercy and entreated them to write down in twenty lines just what they wanted me to say, and promised that I would try to say it (if only they would go away).

Among the callers was a goodly number of inventors, some of them bringing models and plans which always fascinated me, though I was totally incompetent to judge of their merits. One morning about 1903, Sir Hiram Maxim was announced and, having seated himself opposite me, took what looked like a large cylinder of chocolate out of a bag and placed it on the table in front of me. "This," he said, "is the highest explosive in the world and I will now proceed to put a match to it." I knew just enough about explosives to know that they do not explode that way, so I watched with composure while he struck a match and set the cylinder mildly sizzling. He then expounded its properties and the way it exploded and his free handling of it did, I confess, cause me a slight flutter. It was reassuring to remember that he was there as well as I. Having finished his exposition, he got up to go and I went with him to the door and saw him off the premises with a certain sense of relief. But on returning to my room I found that he had left the "highest explosive in the world" on my table. What was I to do? I couldn't pass it on to the office-boy, and obviously I couldn't leave it there. I had heard—and I hope it is true—that explosives are rendered harmless by being put in water, so after reflecting on the problem, I wrapped the cylinder in paper and, taking it with me, went on to the Embankment, and slipping down the stairs by Blackfriars Bridge, deposited it cautiously in the river. To my immense relief it sank and I saw it no more. I hope I did right, but at all events I did my best. Even now I can feel the sense of guilt with which I sidled along the Embankment, and the enormous care I took not to collide with anyone. What sort of story would have been told if I had bumped into an innocent passer-by and we had both gone to heaven, I dare not conjecture.

III

A German who wrote a series of articles on English life somewhere about 1910, said that one of the oddest things he had observed in our country was a London newspaper running a regular competition in Latin and Greek verse. Upon this he founded certain observations on our national character and its aptitude for scholarship which seemed to me at the time to generalize rather rashly. The paper alluded to was the *Westminster Gazette*, which, for twenty years, in its Saturday and afterwards in its weekly edition, offered the modest prize of two guineas every fortnight for the best version of a set passage of English poetry into some Greek or Latin metre. Fleet Street always laughed at this, but, even from the Fleet Street point of view, it was not bad business. It brought the *Westminster* into touch with the public schools and schoolmasters, and caused lively debates in Oxford and Cambridge Common Rooms. All through the twenty years that it lasted this competition was conducted by H. F. Fox, then tutor of Brasenose College, Oxford, an old friend of mine, and a fine scholar, who is unhappily no longer on the scene. The one difficulty was that the versions became rapidly so good as to scare all but the best performers out of the field. Again and again, to name only one competitor, F. W. Pember, Warden of All Souls, produced versions that were unsurpassable. Fox set his face against all mechanical versions constructed out of phrase-books, and did not a little, I think, to encourage literary merit as distinct from mere ingenuity in these exercises.

But the Latin and Greek versions were only a small part of the literary competitions of the Saturday *Westminster*. These for many years were conducted by Miss Royde Smith (now Mrs. Ernest Milton), who has since made a reputation for herself as a writer of novels and a theatrical critic. There were always three prizes offered, and the prize versions and awards generally filled two pages. An occasional appeal was made to me at difficult moments, but my share in it was so small that I can express an unbiased opinion without flattering myself. It seems to me still, as I look back on it, the cleverest thing of the kind ever produced from a newspaper office. All the banalities common to such things were avoided; the editor took her competitors over steeper and steeper fences, and they followed undaunted wherever she led. They poured out prose and poetry to any model and in any metre; they produced epigrams and aphorisms by the thousand; they were as ready with parodies as with epitaphs, and gave equally when she asked for pathos and for bathos. She snubbed and cuffed them, and they took it lying down, and only promised to do better next time. Sometimes I cried out for mercy and begged for a theme which would save aching heads from sleepless nights, but she knew them better than I did and kept them at it with whip and spur. The English are supposed to be unliterary, but the impression I got was that there never could in any country at any time have been a cleverer group of young people than for twenty years or so were deployed on this page.

Young people they mostly were, and not a few who have since made great reputations were regular and zealous contributors. But a good many seniors chopped in from time to time, and among these I remember especially Lord Curzon, who in his busiest times would find an hour or two to try his hand with the rest. The competition editor was no respecter of persons—nothing would have prevented her from gulfing the poet laureate, had she thought him undeserving—and once, I think, Curzon "suffered some wrong," as Browning says of Guercino. But he, too, took it as gaily as the rest, and continued to send highly accomplished versions of French poems which honestly won on their merits. Many of my own literary friends used shyly to confess that they, too, had ventured, but with results that were humbling to pride. Through it all I watched keenly for likely contributors to the daily *Westminster* and got not a few that way.

Now and again I pleaded for a competition which would rope in the multitude, and in answer to one of these pleas, the editor invited her contributors to name "the most beautiful word in the English language." Beautiful words poured in by the thousand, and the normal letter-bag was increased by three. The competition editor called for help, and coming upon the scene at the critical moment when a choice simply had to be made, I found her and an eminent literary man, whom she had asked to advise her, in a state of despair. The question had been put, but no one till that moment had thought of the answer, and there were a thousand answers equally good or bad. They said that on the whole they were inclined to the word "Swallow"—did I agree and would I stand the racket? I said I must know first whether they meant the bird or the thing you did with your throat, whereat the competition dissolved in laughter, and we decided to carry it off with a learned disquisition on the meaninglessness of words apart from their associations. This, I think, was the last time I proposed a popular competition for that page.

IV

The editors of the great morning papers delegate the reviewing of books (or the supervision of it) to "Literary editors," but I was never in a position to do that, nor did I wish to. It was, nevertheless, a very serious part of the daily work, and it presented problems to which there was no solution. Almost every novice who came with an introduction to the editor suggested that he or she should be given books to review, but I was generally adamant about this. Reviewing, contrary to the general belief, is one of the most difficult and exacting of all the tasks committed to the journalist, and is seldom done well except by those who have both knowledge and experience. The newspaper reviewer has to be both readable and fair; he needs taste and judgment and sufficient but not too much knowledge. To give a book to an expert was generally a perilous experiment. The expert over-wrote his space, often failed to make himself intelligible to the vulgar, and sometimes had a bias which was fatal to fairness. There are no such enemies as hostile experts on the same subject, and it was a wise rule for a non-technical journal only to employ them as reviewers when they were known to be good writers and fair-minded men.

Even in those days (and still more I suppose in these) the books that came pouring in during the publishing seasons were an endless perplexity. Those by established authors were picked out and reviewed as a matter of course, but these were comparatively few, and rows upon rows remained, all apparently with equal claims. How pick out those that were worth reviewing or had in them the spark of genius or originality which deserved to be encouraged? Publishers in those days wanted the largest number of books noticed, but since space was limited this meant short reviews, which the reader disliked. What the *Westminster* reader wanted was an intelligible account of a book coupled with serious criticism running to at least half a column, and on fit occasions a good deal more. To give him this was our aim, but it required us to ignore two-thirds of the books published, and even then the arrears of unpublished reviews mounted up, until some were sadly belated and others had to be extinguished altogether. Moreover, in spite of the utmost care, there was no denying that books of great merit were overlooked or inadequately handled.

The perfect solution would have been to employ a literary taster of all-round competence with a liberal salary, whose business it would have been simply to select from the mass the books deserving serious treatment. This was impossible, as we were situated, and a certain haphazardry was inevitable. The difficulty was the greater because, according to the almost universal practice of the trade in these days, the reviewers were paid by the amount they turned out, which meant that if a critic wrote a short review, after putting himself to the trouble of reading a long book, or still more, if he decided it was not worth reviewing at all, he got nothing for his pains. The result of this was that many of the men and women most competent for this work quitted criticism as soon as they found more remunerative work, and that among those who persisted were a considerable number who were in a position to take it lightly as an occupation of their own spare time. I had frequent applications from unknown people who offered to do reviewing gratis for the sake of getting the books.

I am speaking of conditions as they were in the pre-war days, and I hope they have changed since then. I still think with a certain remorse of the admirable and distinguished work done by the reviewers of the old *Westminster*—writers of the first-class like William Archer, Churton Collins, Walter de la Mare, J. D. Beresford, Middleton Murry, J. A. Blaikie and others—and the small reward they got for it. These were men whose sense of literary fitness would never let them spin words to make pennies, and I knew absolutely that with them the merits of the books were everything. But among normal bread-winning human beings it was impossible to expect the best work under such conditions, and it was perhaps more surprising that the general average was so high than that there should have been a certain amount of bad and scamped work. I should like to see the assessment of writing by quantity abolished for all journalists, but if reviewers cannot be paid by salary they should be fairly remunerated for time spent, even if the result is, as it very often should be, insignificant when measured in space.

V

In theatrical criticism the old *Westminster* was exceptionally fortunate. I suppose the present generation of theatre-goers has forgotten the ringing controversies about the notices of E. F. S. (E. F. Spence), a critic of rare acumen, whose courage and honesty made him respected and, I must add, feared by authors, actors and managers. Spence had an enterprising mind which followed sympathetically the new movement going forward under the influence of Ibsen and Shaw, but he struggled manfully to do justice between the new playwrights and the old and paid his tribute to good workmanship wherever found. He was, however, the sworn foe of the cheap and pretentious, and he waged incessant warfare against certain popular favourites, whether authors, actors, or managers, who seemed to him to be debasing public taste. There was, of course, retaliation, and for long periods certain managers withdrew their advertisements, and refused to send tickets for first-nights to the *Westminster*. Again and again the advertisement manager came to me pulling a long face and saying that a certain notice of Spence's had cost the proprietors £200 a year. Hardly less important complaints came from readers that the *Westminster* list of theatres was imperfect, and that they had been compelled for that reason to buy other papers. It seemed to me of real importance that Spence should be well-backed in these encounters, and I am glad to say that the proprietors of the *Westminster* invariably took the same view. In a sense there was right on both sides. We could not complain when a manager said he was not going to advertise in a paper which damaged his enterprises—and Spence's notices did, I think, materially damage some enterprises—but on the other hand, it was evident that a serious critic could not do his duty if he was asked to consider the possible commercial results of an honest judgment.

We never asked Spence to consider them, and seldom or never reported these incidents to him except when the withdrawal of a ticket compelled us to do so. In that case we fought for the principle that the exclusion of the critic on the first night could not debar criticism then or any other night, and, if we thought criticism worth while, we procured it by one means or another. It was a long and often a stubborn fight, but persistence generally won. In the end the economic fact was revealed that the theatre-manager did not advertise to please us or the critic, and that it was not worth his while to be off the theatre list on the front page of a paper which was largely read by well-to-do theatre-goers because he had a quarrel with the critic. It is this commercial aspect of advertising which is or ought to be the guarantee of the critic, whether theatrical or literary. The good critic makes a clientele for his paper which is valuable to the advertiser, but he can only make it if he is allowed the liberty of slating the advertiser's goods. This is the only condition on which the Press can render any permanent service to the producers either of books or of plays. If a newspaper is supposed to be under the influence of its advertisers, it rapidly ceases—in this sphere at all events—to be of value as an "advertising medium."

VI

As an editor I was in more scrapes with writers, actors and playwrights than with all the politicians put together. The critics were always falling on my particular friends when they wrote plays or books or painted pictures, and the victims held me as guilty as if I myself had been the assassin. It was only less bad when their works were overlooked or dismissed in a paragraph, for this also was thought to be a deliberate slight. These incidents were remembered long after I had forgotten them, and some of them, as my letter-bag still shows, went rankling down the years. Nor did the proprietors escape. A rich man who rashly bought a newspaper told me that he was prepared for trouble with politicians, but that he had no idea what he was letting himself in for among his literary and artistic friends. As a matter of fact, politicians seldom gave trouble. It was a regular part of their trade to give and receive blows, and most of them greatly preferred being attacked to being passed in silence. Nor did painters or musicians make much trouble; most of them seemed to be buoyed up with an inward conviction that the critic who found fault with their work was incapable of understanding their art. But the writers were always on edge, and the least word seemed to give them pain.

This sensitiveness about the art of putting words together must be taken as a root fact in human nature. Even the journeyman knows it. An opponent may tear your argument to pieces or assail your character and leave you unmoved, but if he questions your style or says that you write badly he always inflicts a wound. I remember once, when a certain correspondence between two literary men was dragging a weary length on a technical point, saying in despair to one of them, "Why don't you go for his style?" My advice was taken, and the thing blazed at once into a cheerful bonfire of recrimination. Whether the style be the man or not, every writer knows that his character is at stake when this issue is raised, and very few have the complete conviction of their own righteousness which enables the painter or the musician to smile blandly in the face of the critic. I may add that the impeachment of a man's style needs to be conducted with great circumspection, for it is one of the fatalities of the English language that a writer hardly ever succeeds in correcting another writer without himself committing a solecism which exposes him to immediate retaliation. Again and again that has been the experience of the newspaper correspondents who rush into print on these occasions, and an editor who knows his business will always refrain from spoiling sport by correcting the corrector's correction.

The evening *Westminster* was not supposed to be a sporting paper, and it never admitted the tipster to its columns or did more than record the results and the odds in racing. But in the days when golf was still in the stage of being imported from Scotland to England, that great golfer and versatile writer, Horace Hutchinson, wrote a weekly article on it, which was afterwards expanded to include field-sports. We also took great pains with cricket and Rugby football—the two other games which we thought most likely to interest our readers—and, if memory serves me, were first in the field in engaging well-known cricketers to write regularly on the game. For many years P. F. Warner did this work for us, and was afterwards followed by A. G. Faulkner, who is still, I am glad to say, doing it for the morning *Westminster*. I often tried to persuade Warner to give us a faithful account of one of his own innings with a study of the problems he had to meet and a running comment on the bowling. But modesty stood in the way, and he never would do it. Even in those days feeling ran high in the news-room about the performances of cricketers, especially when test matches were on foot, and seeing one day a *Westminster* poster proclaiming "Disgraceful Collapse of England," I wrote and pinned up in the news-editors' room this little notice :—

> Epithets imputing moral obliquity must not be applied to cricketers when they fail to score.

This, as later experience has proved, is a counsel of perfection. In the great debate on the conduct of test matches which took place in 1921, the moral judgment was, as the poet Wordsworth says, "deeply interfused"; and we seemed to be engaged in one of those searching controversies between right and wrong, reform and reaction, which from time to time shake the world. It is, perhaps, the glory of this great game that it has this unique capacity of appealing to first principles.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE ART AND CRAFT OF THE JOURNALIST

The Impulse to Write—The Journeyman and His Tools—Rapid Writing and Its Conditions—Providing Daily Bread—The Mechanics of Leader-writing—The "We" of Journalism—A Cut into Debate—How to Keep Continuity—Certain Little Rules—A Model Controversialist—The Seven Devils of the Writer.

I

THE impulse to write is one of the mysteries of human nature. It is, so far as one can judge, prior to and independent of the thing to be written, a sort of machine inside one constantly demanding to be provided with raw material, and racking one with its racing when it is not so provided. I felt the machine going inside me at a comparatively early age, and remember still a desperate attempt, when I was about fifteen, to produce an essay in the style of one of Mr. Gladstone's Bulgarian Atrocity pamphlets. The fact that I had nothing to say did not in the least deter me; the effort kept the machine fed and gave relief. In the atmosphere in which I was brought up, this seemed perfectly natural. My mother wrote; my father spent most of his spare time in writing; journalists and novelists were scattered all over the family. Not to feel the impulse was an abnormality in our family, and my mother became anxious when it did not appear, or was slow in appearing, in any of our family.

To me all my life the pen has been a tool for the day's work, and never the æsthetic instrument with which the artist makes prose or poetry. The art of writing is interesting to the humblest of literary journeymen, and I will not pretend that I did not and do not take an interest in it. But from the beginning circumstances drove me to the kind of writing in which the thing to be said overshadows the way of saying it, and the writer must think himself happy if he can say competently what he has to say in a given space and time. This kind of writing does not concern students and critics, but it is the necessary pursuit of a great many people, and having practised it for forty-three years, I am tempted to say something about it.

I have written, I suppose, about 11,000 leading articles, and, including special articles and book-reviews, I had a weekly output of from twelve to fifteen thousand words for many years of my life. This meant that I spent about four hours a day, on the average, in the actual work of writing, the rest of an average day of nine hours—often stretched to ten—being given to editing and correspondence. I had several incapacities. I never could dictate anything but formal letters; I could not use a fountain pen without ruining it in two days; I was, except under the spur of necessity, a slow writer. I have been surprised in later years to hear myself described as among the quickest writers in Fleet Street, for I have seldom or never felt that sense of rapid movement which sends the pen flying over the paper. By long practice and with the aid of a relay of very soft pencils and rough-faced copy paper, I did generally manage to get the 1,200-word leading article of the old *Westminster Gazette* finished within the allotted time of an hour and a quarter. But only the inexorable clock and knowledge of the disaster which would follow, if I failed, made this possible, and I still remember the dreadful occasions when the manager brought me lists of trains lost through my hesitations over a phrase.

All such writing depends on realizing the conditions and working within them. It would be atrocious to suggest to a literary artist that he should make one phrase do, when he might find a better, but this is often hard necessity for the writer against time. Actually the best chance of getting through this kind of writing creditably is not to approach it in a literary frame of mind. In this kind the hardest-worked cliché is better than a phrase that fails, and no journeyman should go out of his way to avoid the commonplace unless he is quite sure that he has something better to substitute for it. This may seem a plea for what is called journalese, but it is in reality the opposite. Journalese results from the efforts of the non-literary mind to discover alternatives for the obvious, where none are necessary, and it is best avoided by the frank acceptance of even a hard-worn phrase when it expresses what you want to say. The leader-writer has always to remember that he is expected to provide daily bread and not confectionery. He must therefore aim at a certain homeliness and simplicity, and be very sparing of the ornaments and tricks of style which glitter for a day and then weary, and finally exasperate. My only form of penance, when engaged in daily leader-writing, was occasionally to look back over the files to discover if I was falling into the habit of repeating some word or phrase, or putting on some frill which after a little wearing became vanity. This, I think, is good discipline. Almost all writers fall unconsciously into the habit of working certain words to death, and nearly all would be the better if occasionally they spent an hour or two with a dictionary to discover what quite serviceable words they are neglecting. One makes astonishing discoveries in this way, and for the journeyman who wishes to replenish his much-worn stock, I know of nothing more useful.

The old *Westminster* article was written on small slips of paper, each of which, when finished, went straight to the printer. It had to be written exactly to fit the allotted space and so written as not to need more than the smallest amount of correction, since "overrunning" at the last moment might wreck the time-table. This required the knack of remembering exactly what one had written and writing by a sort of instinct to scale—tricks easily unlearnt and rather difficult to pick up again even at the end of a short holiday. To complicate matters, the editor-writer was always liable to interruption even in the sacred seventy-five minutes assigned to the leading article. Proofs came down from above in an unceasing stream, some specially marked for the editor's eye and requiring instant attention. Letters came, and sometimes even callers, claiming urgency, had to be seen. One's mind was constantly being switched off and having to be switched on again. I remember George Moore calling one day and asking me about the conditions under which the *Westminster* leaders were written. When I told him he threw up his hands and declared writing in such circumstances to be either impossible or miraculous. As a matter of fact, I always found it much harder to write out of the office than in it. On the rare occasions on which a leader was written in the evening at home, it took about twice the time without any conscious dawdling. In the office necessity acted as a spur; one was caught up into the morning whirl; even the noise of machinery below one, incessantly (and as it often seemed unnecessarily) winding paper, preparatory to printing, contributed something to the state of mind in which journalism is produced. Even now I can work through almost any noise or interruption. Those who come into my room when I am at work apologize politely, but they could come and go out without my knowing it, if they did not draw attention to themselves by apologizing.

II

But I do not mean for a moment to suggest that a journalist should always write at the top of his speed or in this whirl. He must be able to do it, when necessary, but, like other writers, he had far better take all the time there is, when there is time. No time is wasted on writing, and if I were asked to advise a young writer going into journalism, I should tell him that he could not expect to do even passing well when called upon to write quickly, unless he was prepared to spend a great deal of time on writing slowly. I was often asked why I took upon myself to do so much other writing, when I had the daily leader on my hands. The answer was that I could not have done the daily leader continuously with even passable credit, if I had not done the other writing. Incessant absorption in political argument without change of subject dulls you for politics and makes writing flat and rhetorical. Incessant writing at high speed needs all the time to be corrected by writing at low speed. Three hours should be spent on fifteen hundred words to atone for every thousand produced in an hour. This may be a counsel of perfection for a busy man, but it should nevertheless be aimed at, for there is no other way in which the quick journalistic writer can keep touch with the art and craft of writing.

The "we" of journalism is a sad trouble to the leader-writer, and to live on comfortable terms with it a large part of his art. There is a great deal of misunderstanding about that "we," and it is generally supposed to be a pompous assumption invented by the newspapers for their greater glory. And true enough what "we" write is at times so bumptious and pretentious that no self-respecting "I" could be induced to put his name to it. But this is not generally the fault of the journalist, who, as a rule, is far more conscious than other people of the absurdities which "we" is called upon to perpetrate. To the journalist this form is a sort of protective colouring which enables him to do his day's job without perpetually foisting himself on the public. It is, I think, the only form in which the daily writing of leading articles by one individual is possible, at all events in this country. If I, for instance, had written my articles in the first person, and signed my name at the bottom of them, I should not have survived six months, let alone twenty-six years. Such pontificating, such liberties with other people, such airs as the daily dose of political criticism necessarily requires could not be tolerated from one individual for more than a few weeks at a stretch. The occasional writer, the specialist, the critic may safely sign his name, but the daily journalist who has to appear every day with exhortation and rebuke will have a very short life, unless he veils his face. After all, even the most eminent of public men has to be sparing of his platform appearances, lest the public tire of him and the newspapers cease to report him. Again and again when readers have written to complain that certain writers were boring them, I have asked the writers to take a pseudonym, but otherwise to go on as before. Then the people who had complained would write and congratulate me on having taken their advice, and say how greatly they preferred the new writer to the old.

Nevertheless, to use "we" sparingly and skilfully, to be ready with ways round it and out of it, and, in spite of it, to get some colour and personality into his writing, are among the chief accomplishments of the leader-writer. Merely to use it correctly needs constant watchfulness. During the war I have more than once found myself writing a sentence in which "we" successively did duty for myself (the writer), for the Allies and for the British people. This is a frequent cause of confusion and irritation to the reader.

III

Style apart, the main point to remember about the leading article is that it is just a cut into the everlasting debate which is everywhere going on in the normal human society. The leader-writer must live in a world of debate and be ready to strike in at any opening that the day presents to him. If he cannot do this, he may be an essayist or a philosopher, but he is not a journalist. It is positively a vice to bring a prepared mind to this kind of writing, and if any journalist tells you that he knows what he is going to write about to-morrow, you may have serious doubts about his capacity for writing it. Never to do to-day what you can put off till to-morrow, and never to think to-day of what you may have to write to-morrow, are the first rules of safety and sanity in this profession. On any other terms the life of the daily writer would be an intolerable worry and anxiety. The panic about finding subjects which afflicts novices is the most groundless of all to a man with the controversial mind. Looking back over forty years, I can remember about ten days in the depths of the holiday season when one was really gravelled for something to write about, and then one launched some fad kept up the sleeve for this rare occasion. On three days out of the six there never was any doubt as to what should be the subject of the front-page leading article; on two days there was a possible choice between two subjects, and on the remaining day there was an overflow from the others which clamoured for its chance. The debater always wants the last word, and leader-writing is a perpetual chase for the opportunity of saying it.

To be writing every day on these terms for a critical and highly intelligent audience was an extraordinary pleasure, and I look back on it as one of the happiest opportunities that a man in my profession could have had in his working life.

I tried to keep through it all a certain continuity of ideas, but the daily debate softened the solemnity of that process and kept one in a pleasant ferment of minor incidents and personalities. How keenly one read the newspapers for the little slips and absurdities, the something they didn't intend to say, perpetrated by even the wisest of politicians, and happily provided in abundance by lesser men! These gave one the opening without which the article would have been a disquisition and not a contribution to debate; and one of the drawbacks of the abbreviated reporting of these times is that they so often pass unrecorded. At the *Westminster* we were always on the hunt for them, and when I failed, there was the eagle eye of Charles Geake, who missed nothing. It was one of the great advantages of writing for an evening paper, that instead of having to pick up your material from proof, "flimsy" and "tape," you had the whole scene laid out for you in the morning papers, and what one paper had omitted could be made good from the others.

I had certain little rules for myself which may or may not be useful for others. One was to make my language most moderate when my views were most extreme. Follow this and you may earn a reputation for sobriety and moderation while steadily expounding the most subversive views. The reputation which the *Westminster* had for moderation was most serviceable, and enabled it to advocate left-wing Radicalism as if it were the normal creed of the sensible and moderate people who read it. Another rule was to write at least three articles in succession on any subject on which I wished specially to air my views. For our readers a moderate dose constantly repeated was far better than a strong dose administered once. I am struck in reading newspapers to-day with the frequent changes in the subjects of their principal leading articles. Apparently the public is supposed to want the same variety in the leading articles as it undoubtedly demands in its news. This, I am sure, is a mistake, if the object is to influence opinion. The psychological approaches to news and opinion are two different things; and if a newspaper takes up a subject with apparent earnestness and conviction and then drops it or only returns to it after many days, the reader is checked and disappointed. I have seen eyebrows go up among the staff when I have told them that I was going to write on the same subject on a fourth or fifth day, but I think I was right. This was what the serious reader wanted, and my business was to provide it.

Another little rule which H. G. Wells taught me through a parody in one of his novels which had an uncomfortable resemblance to a *Westminster* leading article, was to be very sparing of the word "however." One flies to "however" when one has exhausted "but." An example lies before me: "It is easy to show where Mr. Baldwin is wrong, but the weakness of the Opposition lies in its inability to produce something better. The Opposition, however, has something to say for itself," etc. One may trail on indefinitely in this way, with "buts" and "howevers" balancing and qualifying, until the reader is muddled and the point fogged, if there ever was a point. The writers of books love this style, and in the ampler space of the chapter or the volume may sometimes pull it right. But to qualify qualifications is fatal in the short space of the leading article, and I found that by banishing "however" I not only helped myself to say what I wanted to say at the first intention, but braced and tightened the whole structure of an article. I never had a more serviceable short lesson in the art of writing, and if Wells has forgotten it, I should like to recall it to him.

It may seem a strange thing to say, but I have learnt more of the art of controversial writing from John Henry Newman than from any other English writer. Among the Victorians he is the supreme controversialist with the pen. No one surpasses him in the softness of his approach to a hostile audience or the neatness and finish of his attack when he has gained his footing. No one is so deft in quoting an opponent—one of the most difficult of all the journalistic arts—or more deadly in reply with so little offence. The Introduction to the Apologia (of course, in the original and not in the subsequent expurgated editions) is a masterpiece of controversial writing and may be read again and again with profit by those who have to debate with their pens. Newman's theology never gripped me and I stumbled over the major premises of his arguments, but if these were granted, his method was fascinating and his style compelling. He is, of course, beyond imitation, but he is one of the few writers of genius who do not infect with the itch to imitate, and the journeyman of letters may learn from him without presumption.

It is a common belief that writing becomes easier by practice, but that is not the experience of most writers. In one's sanguine moments one may hope that it becomes better, but it certainly does not become easier. At the end of one's life, one sweats blood over it as at the beginning. With the necessity of producing a given portion in a given time relaxed, the sense of the difficulty of it is even increased. Now you are at liberty to tear up and rewrite—a thing undreamt of by the journeyman—and you discover that you may do this half a dozen times and be no nearer the perfect expression of which you dream. Formerly there was a swift and merciful oblivion for yesterday's portion, and the necessity of going on saved you from the mortification of looking back; now there is the vexation of seeing in "book form" the clumsy paragraphs, the ill-constructed chapters, the defeated attempts to express simply some quite simple idea. The *esprit d'escalier*, which the journalist can always satisfy in to-morrow's article, becomes a teasing demon to the writer of books. The thing is no sooner finished than you think how much better you could do it, if you could begin all over again, with the knowledge and experience that you have at the end. Journalism you could turn on and off, and be as light-hearted about what you would write to-morrow as about what you wrote yesterday; but a book never leaves you when once you are embarked on it. The material, the construction, the stubborn passages, even certain epithets and phrases follow you about and will not be driven away. I do not know how it is with great and imaginative writers, but a pedestrian, like myself, feels more and more as he grows older the difficulty of preventing the mechanism quenching the thought. He feels, as he sits down to the daily task, certain things coming on, so to speak; the thumping antithesis, the rhetorical flourish, the otiose adjective, the pseudo-picturesque metaphor—these and other seven devils all bent on defeating his effort to see and say the thing as it is.

Yet with it all there is no other life which a man who really has the impulse could wish to lead or, indeed, is fitted to lead. And journalism does to a large extent cure its artificiality by compelling the journalist to use his pen as a mode of action and for immediately practical ends. His task is literally for the day and his glory is to be a good ephemeral. For him it is not merely vanity but a distortion of his proper aim to aspire to be anything else. He throws into the common stock the good, bad, or indifferent that may be in him, and must do it with a prodigality which would be crime in an artist. Every man must do it in his own way, and no man can teach his fellow. At the end the judgment passed on the journalist will not be upon his writing, but, if anyone thinks it worth while to judge him at all, upon what he contributed of wisdom or folly to opinion in his time.

CHAPTER XXXIII

ABOUT NORTHCLIFFE

The Times and Its Editorship—Friendship with Northcliffe—His Qualities and Defects—His Attitude to the *Westminster*—An Offer of Help—A Battle Royal—A Last Talk—Irish and Anglo-Saxon—His Intuitions—Tariff Reform and the Stomach Taxes—The "Funny Old Men."

IN a singular pamphlet which he wrote a few months before his death, Northcliffe devoted several pages to myself, and among other things took occasion to deny that he had offered me the editorship of *The Times*, while handsomely allowing that I was one of the few men whom he thought qualified for that position. The denial was true, but when Buckle's resignation was pending, Repington, who was then military correspondent of *The Times*, came to see me at my house, apparently with Northcliffe's knowledge, and asked me if there were any conditions on which, if it were offered to me, I would accept the position. The conversation lasted barely a quarter of an hour, and was wound up by my saying that if *The Times* were to continue its then line of policy, especially on Tariff Reform and Home Rule (as I was assured must be the case), it was plain that Northcliffe could not offer me the appointment or I accept it. It ended at that, and I heard no more about it, but I may perhaps add now that Northcliffe himself had already, though perhaps without knowing it, shut the door on any chance I might have had of becoming editor of *The Times*. For among the many schemes for acquiring control of the paper early in 1908, there was one promoted by a group which desired to convert it into a Free Trade organ, and I was to a certain extent concerned in that. In after years this has been represented as an attempt to capture *The Times* for pro-German interests, that legend having, I suppose, arisen out of the fact that a well-known financier of Belgian origin who, like many Belgians, had a German name, played some small part in it. Campbell-Bannerman was one of the moving spirits in it, and the last communication I ever received from him was a message from his sick-room to say that he hoped it would go through and would result in my being editor of a Free Trade and independent *Times*. It did not go through, and if ever it had a chance, Campbell-Bannerman's death extinguished it.

I am sure that *The Times*, which has splendidly surmounted all its difficulties, has no reason to regret that it turned out so; and, though to be its editor is a prospect which may fire the ambition of any journalist, I had many consolations in remaining where I was. There, the chief part of my work and the part that I liked best was the daily writing, which it is almost impossible to combine with the editing of a great morning newspaper. Moreover, I was in great doubt about *The Times* being financed by any group, for what it most seemed to need at that moment was one predominant proprietor, who would be prepared to support it in all circumstances. I remained in suspense for some weeks, but Northcliffe finally threw all other competitors out of the field, and so far as I was concerned, the question was settled. When the same question arose at other times, with other morning papers, I gave the answer unhesitatingly that I preferred to remain where I was.

To the end of his days Northcliffe always had an attraction for me. There was a time when I knew him intimately, and Stead used to say that to convert him (I never knew quite to what) was one of my missions in life. He was stubborn material for any kind of gospeller, and used to leave one breathless and disarmed by a bland denial of what one thought to be first principles. The ease with which he made money, the extraordinary *flair* that he had for the things that would catch on, and his instant retreats from the things that did not, were a perpetual astonishment to me. We often discussed our respective abilities and disabilities, and he said that money-making was "a mug's game" and wondered that I couldn't do it. When the *Westminster* was first started he was still in the homely little building just opposite our office where

Answers was first produced, and I often went across to have a talk with him and sometimes he came to see me. A year or two later he moved into his Napoleonic office in Carmelite House where the *Daily Mail* was now produced, and we continued to exchange visits. I expressed in the freest terms my opinion of what I thought to be the enormities of his new paper, and he never showed the slightest resentment, but discussed with a cool impartiality whether they were good journalism or not—a point which he always seemed to decide finally in his own mind by a reference to the circulation books.

Though the money rolled in, he was not in the least vulgar about it. He had known the pinch of poverty in his childhood, and with his usual directness appears to have made up his mind quite early in life that this obstruction to happiness must be put out of the way for himself and all his family before anything else was done. For the rest, money was to him, as it was to Cecil Rhodes, the means to power, and he was entirely without purse-pride in any of the ordinary relations of life. He liked to live in pleasant surroundings, and his wife showed rare taste and skill in the appointment and furnishing of Sutton Place, and the planning of its beautiful gardens, but the hospitality there was simple and charming, and without the slightest suspicion of social climbing. Here, at home, he showed the qualities which attracted men like Henley and Charles Furse; he had a real respect for writers and artists; he read history with a hungry eye for powerful characters, and showed a queer kind of unexpected knowledge in his talk. His insight into the popular mind was so unerring as to make him the perfect master of crowd psychology. But his special pride was to be first in the field with coming things, and the Sutton Place garage was full to overflowing with motor-cars when they were still a dangerous novelty. He loved to astonish and alarm his friends by whirling them in these strange machines to what then seemed certain destruction, and gave them good or bad marks according as they stood the test. I think I earned his approbation as one of the few of the writing tribe who seemed to like it, and he invited me to join him in the trials of his new ninety-horse-power Mercedes. Starting at half-past six on a Sunday morning, we went over the Hog's Back, with him at the wheel and the chauffeur on the step, and for one wild minute topped the hundred miles an hour. It was terrifying, for I sat beside him in a little seat with nothing to hold on to, but I managed to conceal my emotions and was judged to have done well.

My missionary work made no progress, and I never flattered myself that I had any influence over him. But I liked him; there was a certain boyishness in his character and an absence of pretence which was very attractive. I think he liked me, but he made no secret that he thought of me and the *Westminster* as baffling exceptions to the nature of things. Here was a newspaper which, according to his standards, had an entirely ridiculous circulation, and yet somehow seemed to make an impression which in a well-ordered world it ought not to make. That kind of influence, he said to me quite frankly, was what he wanted, and if the *Westminster* were his, he would double, treble, quadruple its circulation and multiply its influence accordingly. I used to reply that he couldn't own the *Westminster* without destroying it, that the mere fact of the same proprietor owning two such papers as the *Mail* and the *Westminster* and obviously running two different policies in them would be fatal to the *Westminster* and damaging to the *Mail*. He saw no objection; he had, he told me, a great many papers with different policies, and so long as they were good newspapers, he never interfered with their policies. He added with a chuckle that he often drew cheques for the salaries of editors and journalists who attacked him fiercely in their newspapers, in bland ignorance of the fact that he was their paymaster and proprietor.

One day in 1902 he came into my room in Tudor Street and said that he had heard rumours that the *Westminster* was in difficulties and was going to stop. He didn't wish to ask me anything about these, but he had a regard for me, and he wanted to say that if I were in any trouble or anxiety, I might at any moment draw on him for £100,000. Cynics may suggest that he had a motive in this, but I am sure that it was a generous and kindly impulse, and I told him at once that I was greatly touched by his thought of me. But I thought it the more due to him to say exactly what was in my mind about any possible professional relations with him. He had said that the use of his money to tide over a difficulty, if there was one, would leave me perfectly free and under no obligation to him. I replied that this was impossible, and that if he paid that sum or anything like it, he would, in fact, be proprietor of the *Westminster* and my master, and that I was not willing that he should be my master, however much I valued his friendship. We debated long and keenly about our respective ideas of journalism, and I put to him certain hypothetical cases in which I felt sure that he would not and could not leave me my freedom. He said that they were too remote to be worth considering, but admitted that I could make a formal case. Finally, I asked, could either of us afford to have this transaction made public, and if not, what would be our position if we entered into it secretly? This ended the matter.

I spoke very plainly, but he bore me no malice. Rather, I think, the knowledge that I stood definitely outside his circle helped us to remain friends for two or three years longer. Then for a period of years, the years of his greatest success, I saw him no more. By this time I had taken up my parable against certain things that he stood for, and our worlds were so entirely different that the old familiarity had become impossible. In 1915 he attacked me violently in all his newspapers, plastering the town with my name and apparently suggesting that I was in the pay of the enemy. He was then making an agitation about the air defences of London, and I had strongly remonstrated, saying that London must resign itself to occasional air raids until it was quite certain that the front was well supplied with aircraft. The controversy is not worth recalling, but in the course of it I said something which appears to have stung him into a sudden wrath, and this was his retort. I knew him well enough to be sure that, if I merely kept a dignified silence, and let this stream of denunciation descend on me day by day and perhaps week after week, I should be very seriously damaged; so I took off my coat, threw away my moderation, and for the next three days attacked him with all the weapons at my disposal. Before the week was out he sent me a message to say that he had always had the greatest respect for me and that the last thing he had intended was to suggest anything that reflected on my honour or character. Wouldn't I dine with him and let us lay our heads together about the situation? I did not dine with him, but this public wrangle between journalists in the middle of the war had become an unseemly business, and I was only too glad to make an end of it, though its sudden cessation at what seemed to be its most interesting point caused much speculation in both camps.

When the second Coalition had come and he was forming the Propaganda Department which worked from Crewe House, he asked me to join it; but I felt that I should be intractable material in his hands and that I should be better employed on my own job at the *Westminster*. So I declined it and remained outside the inner circle during the next two years. When the war was over, I saw him once more and for the last time. I was at Victoria Station one day on my way to the Kent coast, and was looking in vain for a place in a crowded train, when I became conscious of a head thrust out of a first-class carriage and a voice calling my name. It was Northcliffe begging me to take one of two places that he had reserved for himself, and for the next two hours we travelled together and talked without ceasing. He seemed to pick up the threads just where they had been broken twelve years before, and plunged into an intimate and confidential account of himself and his newspapers and his relations with Lloyd George, especially the last. He seemed ill and worn, and sadly at war with the world and his official friends. He said he greatly resented the rumours that had been put about that his quarrel with Lloyd George was due to mortification at not being appointed a British delegate at the Peace Conference. Those who spread this story knew perfectly well that in the early months of 1919 he was threatened with a very serious operation, and under imperative medical orders to do nothing but prepare himself for it. He spoke bitterly about the ingratitude of politicians and their tortuous ways, and said that journalists had far better stick to their newspapers and give them a wide berth. He added that he was not done with them yet, and spoke sanguinely of his cure, which was then in progress, and what he was going to do afterwards.

His desire to be even with his official friends and to assert himself powerfully before he went off the scene contributed to the wreck of his health and made his last years confused and feverish. But the campaign which, with Wickham Steed's aid, he conducted against the Irish policy of the Government, was one of the most powerful efforts in the journalism of my time, and it was, I am sure, inspired by a generous impulse in which the Irishman within him came to the top. A good deal in Northcliffe's character was, I think, explained by this Irish strain. One half of him was an Irish romantic, the other a scheming, ambitious, ruthless Anglo-Saxon. The two were always fighting, and neither won. He had an insatiable appetite for power, but never could make up his mind what to do with it when he got it. This made him the most restless and discontented of all the successful men of his time, but it also redeemed him from the mere commercialism which is the professed creed of other men of his kind.

A candid study of Northcliffe's mind and method would be of enormous value to the psychologist of these times. He was immensely important, however much solemn people might try to blink or evade the fact. He and his imitators influenced the common mind more than all the Education Ministers put together; of all the influences that destroyed the old politics and put the three-decker journalist out of action, his was by far the most powerful. In a sense he was the only completely convinced democrat I ever knew. He did really believe that things ought to be decided by the mass opinion about them, and to find out what that was or what it was going to be, and to express it powerfully, seemed to him not only profitable but right and wise. His complete detachment from what are ordinarily supposed to be the merits of things and total absorption in what people thought about them were a perpetual amazement to me, until I grasped that his mind really did work in this way and that he did honestly think the fact of a thing's "catching on" to be the proof of its rightness.

He had extraordinary intuitions about this business of "catching-on," but now and again he made rather serious mistakes in applying his knowledge. I was behind the scenes when he was making up his mind about Chamberlain's tariff policy in 1903, and a very strange process it was. So far as he had any views, he was a Protectionist, and he unhesitatingly ascribed what he called the "colossal success" of Germany and the United States to their tariffs. But his intuition told him that the British people would never stand food taxes, and so, for a period, he held his hand while an army of investigators listened to what the man in the street and the man in the public-house was saying, and presently sent their reports to Carmelite House in little black notebooks. The little black notebooks overwhelmingly confirmed the intuition (Northcliffe let me see some of them, and extremely interesting they were), and the way was now clear to open the famous campaign against the "stomach-taxes." But then an unexpected thing happened. The *Daily Mail* readers, so far from responding, were evidently hostile, and large numbers manifested their displeasure in letters to the editor. Northcliffe was honestly puzzled. The ground had been carefully explored and tested and every precaution taken against error, and yet the expected results did not follow. Something was wrong, but what could it be?

Northcliffe pondered the matter deeply, and came to the conclusion that the Free Trade case was being badly conducted. C. B. was a duffer, Asquith had no magnetism, and the rest dealt in economic arguments which were duller than ditch-water. What could a live newspaper do with such dead-heads? There must be a man to pit against Chamberlain, and who else could it be but Rosebery—Rosebery properly exploited and stage-managed, and not left in the hands of the Liberal dodderers. So Northcliffe sat down and wrote a letter to Rosebery offering to place the whole of his newspapers and organization at his disposal, provided he would make a minimum number of speeches during the autumn and winter and permit them to be timed and arranged by Northcliffe and his staff, so as to yield the utmost quantity of effective publicity.

I happened to be staying at Mentmore on the day in August, 1903, when this letter was delivered by a special courier who found his way into a tent on the lawn in which we were sitting on that very hot afternoon. The messenger withdrew but stood outside, for, if I remember rightly, he was instructed to wait for an answer. Rosebery read the letter and passed it over to me, and having read it I am afraid I laughed. It was so like Northcliffe and the whole scene was so bizarre. Rosebery, too, laughed, but he was also visibly angry and, going out of the tent, he told the messenger he would write. Write he did, and though I did not see the letter, Northcliffe told me afterwards that he was as impossible as all the other Liberal leaders, and that no one in his senses would go tiger-hunting with any of them.

So the "anti-stomach-tax" campaign was short-lived, and Northcliffe discovered that, though his intuition about the great public was as right as usual, it did not apply to the million who read the *Daily Mail.* The vast majority of these were simply middle-class folk who habitually voted Tory, and saw no reason to doubt the assurance which was presently given to them that the foreigner would pay. Northcliffe never wavered in his belief that the Tory party were going smash over the business, and he told me more than once that I greatly underestimated the coming Liberal majority. But his admiration for Chamberlain, as the one real business man among politicians, the man who did things on the big scale and knew how to put the waters in a roar, was unbounded, and he compared him gleefully with the "funny old men" who ran the Liberal party.

CHAPTER XXXIV

"WAR-GUILT"

The Doomed Generation and Its Elders—Did we Know?—Ignorance and Its Causes—War Guilt—Our Attitude Towards War—The "Sufficient" Cause—Our Approach to 1914—An Unmoral System—And Its Moral.

I

THE editor of the *Daily Courant*, the first daily paper produced in the British Isles, said on presenting his news sheet that he was sure his readers "would have enough good sense to supply the reflections." His successors in the subsequent two hundred and fifty years have certainly not remained steadfast in this faith, and ingrained habit tempts me to conclude this book with a few reflections on life and opinion and finally on religion, in these times.

There is one thought which must often recur to a man of my age. I was fifty-one years of age when the Great War broke out. Had I been twenty years younger, it is highly probable that instead of living to write this book I should have found a grave on one or other of the battle fronts before my thirty-fifth year. A man of my generation can never forget the monstrous stroke of fate which fell on those who chanced to be born between the years 1878 and 1898, or think of the scores of thousands who went to early graves in the Great War without feeling their fate to be a reflection on his title to be alive. Still more so if he took any part in public affairs and had any responsibility, even indirect, in the shaping of the policy which was a sentence of doom for so many of his juniors.

It is at all events our generation which will chiefly be held to account, and it is precisely this generation which finds it most difficult to give an intelligible account of itself. Speaking as an Englishman, I am not disposed, like some of my contemporaries, to stand in a white sheet. I have read practically the whole of the British documents between 1906 and 1914, a large number of the German, most of the Bolshevist publications, and many of the Memoirs and Reminiscences that have appeared in different countries since the war. It seems to me that our own country comes better out of this test than almost any other, and that its policy looks honest and straightforward, if, according to European standards, a little naïve. The general drift of opinion, even in ex-enemy countries, is to acquit us of aggressive intentions and to acknowledge that we were pursuing a defensive line imposed on us by the policy of the Central Powers, and especially by the German challenge to us at sea. This, I believe to be the truth, and I believe also that if our successors should find themselves in like circumstances, they will be compelled to act as we did. The hope of the future is not, as I see it, that they will be more moral or more pacific than we were, but that they will not be placed in the circumstances in which we found ourselves at the outbreak of the Great War and in the preceding years.

There is one fact especially which seems to me to encourage this hope, and which is newer in the history of opinion than is generally realized. This is the acknowledgment by the victors as well as the vanquished that the Great War was a great catastrophe in which the suffering far outweighed the gains. No one claims credit for having planned or forced this war; the victors are as much concerned as the vanquished to prove that the blame was on the other side. We now habitually speak of "war-guilt" as the greatest of public crimes, and have almost persuaded ourselves that we have always thought of war in this way.

This, it seems to me, is an illusion which we ought not to pass on to those who come after. The Great War arose out of a state of opinion which regarded war as a legitimate and normal method of promoting national interests; and to prevent opinion slipping back into that atmosphere is perhaps the greatest task before the coming generation. It is a good thing, if only it lasts, that we should all be so impressed with the horrors of war as to speak of war-makers and militarists as criminals, but we did not speak or think in that way before the war. Let me take as an example the case which is commonly made against the Russians for having, as is alleged, precipitated the war by mobilizing in July, 1914. This may, in a sense, be true, but at the time, not one person in a hundred would have imputed "guilt" to Russia, if it had been true. We might have called her precipitate or impolitic, but we should not have called her guilty. For, according to the ideas of the time, Russia was fully entitled to mobilize after Austria had done so, and if she had left Serbia to her fate without moving, she would afterwards have incurred much the same reproach as we should have, if at the later stage we had left Belgium to her fate. I myself felt, as I feel still, that the rally of Russia to Serbia was one of the few spirited acts of the Czardom, and though (if I had known all the facts) I might have wished to restrain her from motives of prudence, I should certainly not have held her morally to blame, when she persisted.

The truth is that in the world in which we were brought up, the crime was not to make war, but to make it unsuccessfully, and so it had been from the beginning of time. Up to 1914 all the Governments of Europe, our own included, regarded war as a risk which had to be run, a legitimate gamble, as Churchill said of the Dardanelles Expedition, a "continuation of policy," as the Germans defined it. If any question of "guilt" arose it was only between the unsuccessful maker of war and his countrymen, who as a rule were extremely unforgiving about it. The rest were judged by results, and those who came back in triumph were almost invariably acclaimed as great statesmen and saviours of their country, regardless of whether they were aggressors or were resisting aggression. In my early days Bismarck stood on the highest pedestal among nation-makers and empire-builders, and he acknowledged that he had welded the German Empire in blood and iron in a series of carefully planned wars. Frenchmen deplored the balance of forces which made it seemingly impossible for them to recover the lost Provinces, but very few of them would have thought it a crime to wage war for their recovery, if there had been a reasonable chance of its being waged successfully.

Nor can it honestly be said that we British held a different view. We considered ourselves to be pacific, but, as our neighbours pointed out, we had been more frequently at war than any of them, and the possibility of war entered into the calculations of both our political parties. Somewhere about the year 1900, I got myself into much trouble for saying, "There is no peace-at-any-price party; there are only various parties which disapprove of each other's wars. All the peace parties that I have known have ardently desired to make war on the Sultan of Turkey, but most of them appear to regard it as a humanitarian picnic, which is almost certainly a delusion." Massingham retorted sharply, not by denying the imputation, but by saying that they were under no such delusion. They thought war with all its horrors worth while for the redemption of the Armenian Christians from massacre and oppression. So far as I can remember, no one censured Rosebery because in 1894 he was willing to resent to the point of war what had appeared for the moment to be a deliberate affront to the British flag in the far-away waters of the Mekong, nor four years later was there any serious dissent when Salisbury risked war with France to prevent Marchand from hoisting the French flag on the upper Nile. In the following year it was the serious opinion of most Englishmen, including a considerable number of Liberals, that war was the only solution of the British-Dutch problem in South Africa, and the issue was passionately declared to be one of the "inevitables" which can only be resolved by an appeal to the sword. I thought that it might and ought to have been avoided, but I could never bring myself to denounce it as a crime. It was, in fact, according to all the standards of this time, the only way out after the diplomatic boiling-up which had led to the Krüger ultimatum. "I date from the ultimatum as Mohamedans from the Hegira," said Rosebery, and the vast majority agreed with him. Again, in 1904 there were several days when all parties contemplated war with Russia as the proper way of resenting what was thought to be the deliberate outrage of the Russian fleet on the fishermen of the Dogger Bank. During these years we were all of us, Tories, Liberals and Radicals, prepared to make war for what we deemed to be *sufficient* cause. We might debate angrily about the sufficiency of the cause, but we never denied that, if the cause was sufficient, war was the legitimate *ultima ratio*, and not merely for the defence of territory, but also for what were conceived to be the interests of the British Empire or the resentment of injuries to it.

II

This was the atmosphere in which we approached the European struggle. From the year 1906 my own thoughts were concentrated on the problem of sea power, and I thought of almost everything else as subordinate to that. I had done whatever a journalist could in the previous years to keep the Anglo-French quarrel, which had been steadily rising, within bounds; and in the subsequent years to make an end of it seemed to me essential, if the Germans were going to challenge us at sea. Germany might be strong enough to risk the enmity of France, Russia and Great Britain at the same time; but we certainly were not strong enough to be on bad terms with Russia, France and Germany at the same time. The two-Power standard which had served us in the last years of the nineteenth century would evidently be insufficient if we could suppose either three Powers being joined against us, or the more likely event of Germany subduing her enemies and joining their fleets to those of the Triple Alliance in an attack on the British Empire. At first I believed and hoped that British friendship with France would check German ambitions, and enable us eventually to come to terms with Germany and even to act as mediator between her and France. But as the years went by, and one Navy Law followed another, and the ex-Kaiser and his militarists talked in louder and louder tones about their intentions, these hopes waned, and it seemed more and more evident that the only way of safety lay in building ships and cultivating the entente with France and Russia. Looking back on it, I am inclined to say that the die was cast for this country from the moment when it became necessary under pressure of the German Fleet to transfer the British Mediterranean Squadron to the North Sea and arrange with France for the protection of the Mediterranean. From that moment, we were morally, if not technically, bound to act with France if her unprotected northern coasts were attacked by Germany. In the circumstances we were obliged to accept this obligation, for Germany herself by her fleet policy had thrust it on us.

For us at all events the problem, as I saw it, was a mechanical and not a moral one, and we seldom thought of it in terms of guilt or innocence. Russia and France were often very uneasy bedfellows for us, and as a journalist I felt perfectly free to criticize their action and to use any influence I possessed to stem the growing hostility between Germany and ourselves. Precisely because the situation was dangerous, it seemed imperative to seize every opportunity of building bridges with Germany and urging moderation on France and Russia, provided it was understood that we were firm on the essentials of maintaining the Entente and keeping our fleet supreme. I see no reason why an Englishman should think it necessary to defend all the proceedings of France and Russia in these years. Personally I do not believe for a moment that the post-war German theory that Poincaré and Isvolsky were in league to force war in the last two years is true, but I do think that the French were unnecessarily provocative on the Morocco question and especially in their march to Fez in 1911, and I do think that both Russia and Austria were playing a dangerously sharp game in the Balkans in the final eighteen months. But all this was in the atmosphere of those times. In the state in which we lived it seemed natural and commendable that each nation should use its power to defend or promote what it supposed to be its own interests, and the notion that any nation considered itself limited to repelling aggression is either a post-war illusion or a figment of war propaganda.

III

We had, I think, abundant justification on any code of ethics whatever for taking up arms against Germany when she invaded Belgium. That action on her part, combined with the sinking of the "Lusitania," the launching of poison gas and the ruthless submarine incensed Anglo-Saxon opinion against her and made her, in the eyes of her enemies, the moral villain of the piece. Also we felt that the victory of Germany would be the end of Liberal and democratic institutions in Europe. It is nevertheless true—and perhaps the most important part of the truth about the old Europe—that if Germany had been incontestably in the right and her conduct in the war irreproachable, the reasons compelling this country to take sides against her would have been just as strong, and its position just as perilous, if it had failed to do so, as on the contrary assumption. Whatever the issue on which she fought, a victorious Germany in possession of Belgium and the Channel ports and commanding all the fleets of Europe must have been a deadly menace to the British Empire, and, according to the accepted principles of power-politics she would have been entitled to assert her supremacy over it in any way she chose. Under the balance of power system, the balance had to be in your favour, whether your opponents were angels or devils. It was good fortune if they put you morally in the right by acting as devils, but this was not the essence of the matter. The essential thing was that you were caught up in a play of forces from which the common morality was ruled out. You might have all the virtues on your side and yet be ruined; you might commit every wickedness and yet emerge triumphant. In such a world it necessarily became virtue in a statesman to have the forces on his side and be thankful if he could plausibly maintain that his opponents were morally in the wrong.

Men of my generation grew up with this system, became hardened to it, accepted its assumptions, and acted according to its logic. We looked to our statesmen to play the diplomatic game with skill and not to leave us isolated in a hostile world. For the greater part of our lives we had no prepossessions or preferences as between our neighbours in Europe. From the 'seventies right down to 1906 Russia was supposed to be our principal rival and potential enemy, and for a great many years we leant on Germany and the Triple Alliance and had dangerous quarrels with France. We came very near an alliance with Germany in 1899, and, had the Germans not drawn back at the eleventh hour, the whole course of history might have been different. Then, when the Germans began to develop their sea power, we found safety in the French and

Russian ententes. Under the system there was no other way, and it was great good fortune for us to have had statesmen who held firmly to this line and resisted the attempt to drive wedges between us and our partners on subordinate issues. The judgment must be broadly on the management of forces, and the best thing we can do for those who come after is to make a clean breast of it and leave the moral verdict to history.

IV

So far as this fundamentally immoral or un-moral system had any one author, it was Bismarck, whose leading idea it was to obtain "security" for Germany after the Franco-German war by alliances which must have dominated Europe, if the field had been left clear to them. What Bismarck failed to see was that a German alliance would inevitably be countered by another alliance; and that the armed competition of these two, and the mutual fears and jealousies attending it, would lead to a far greater struggle than any that was contemplated in his time or in his scheme of statesmanship, which thought of war as a short, sharp and successful assault upon opponents isolated and taken unawares. The responsibility for what followed was spread over fifty years and distributed between six principal Powers and innumerable Ministers, most of them creatures of the hour, who found themselves faced with an accumulation of established facts in which it was dangerous to make even a well-intentioned departure. Campbell-Bannerman in 1906 sincerely and honestly desired to make a new move towards disarmament, but he found to his enormous surprise that the article published in the *Nation* in which he threw out this idea was regarded in Germany as a threatening manifestation. I was solemnly called upon at the time to write articles which were telegraphed to and published in German papers explaining that he had no bellicose intention. To the German it seemed as if the British Government had made up its mind to call a halt to German shipbuilding at the point most convenient to itself, and from that it was but a short step to assume that it would make war if its demand was refused.

Indeed, no adventure seemed less promising or more dangerous in these days than the endeavour to promote peace by disarmament, and, had there been a convinced pacifist Power, it would certainly have had to fight for its cause. The one hope for the world is that the coming generation will know what war on the European scale is and must be. Our generation did not know it. It used the current phrases about the horrors of war, but the wars which it had in mind were the Crimean War, the Franco-German War and the Boer War. All the militarist philosophers assumed that the victory would be on their side. When they spoke of blood and iron, it was of their own iron and other people's blood that they were thinking; when they talked of the "terrible medicine," it was their enemy and not themselves who were to take it. It was thought unmanly in these circles to contemplate even the possibility of defeat. In August, 1914, the German General Staff dreamt of swift and crushing blows compelling the enemy to surrender before he knew what had happened to him; and it was as little prepared as its opponents with either plans or munitions for the interminable war of exhaustion which followed when this dream faded. Still less did any Government or General Staff foresee the development of "frightfulness" which all the authorities agree in thinking to be only a faint shadow of what the future may produce if the nations proceed again to the test of arms.

I think it is safe to say that if our generation had realized what the Great War was to be, whether for victors or vanquished, there would have been no Great War, but whether another generation will learn of our experience is beyond prophecy, and one must leave it at Grey's "learn or perish." We lived in pre-scientific times. We had enough science to make very deadly engines of war, but not enough to measure their effect. We worked on a mediæval theory with weapons which blew our theory sky-high. What our successors have to realize is that science turns war into a destructive anarchy, in which the defeat of all the combatants is to be presumed. The philosophy of war has always been the philosophy of successful war, and there is no theory which can turn a defeat into a "continuation of policy." The one lesson which our generation can teach to those who come after is that war is the ruin of policy and the way of destruction for all the combatants. It remains for them, if they wish civilization to survive, to build up a new opinion on this basis and to organize it for the keeping of the peace. We can only confess that *our* theory—which was the theory of all the world then—and the organization built on it came in our time to what ought to be its final disaster.

A last thought to pass on is that all the efforts to humanize war and limit its frightfulness broke down in our time, when put to the test. We know now that war cannot be civilized. It goes backward as other institutions go forward, and causes the powers of destruction to outrun the powers of creation. The Great War leaves it an open question whether the scientific age which began in the nineteenth century has on balance been of benefit to mankind. Another generation will certainly not be able to leave that question unanswered.

CHAPTER XXXV

POLITICS AND PROGRESS

The Decline of Liberalism—Some General Causes—Nonconformists and Politics—The Attack on the Capitalist System—Fabianism and Marxism—Labour as a Refuge—Impending Changes—Faith in Democracy—Difficulties of Democratic Government—The Need of New Machinery—Knowledge and Opinion in Politics.

I

ANYONE who like myself has devoted a large part of his life to Liberal politics must feel some sense of failure when he looks at the political scene in the year 1927. His reward would indeed be meagre if he were paid by results as measured in the condition of the Liberal party. Someone said in the last year of the eighteenth century that the Whig party in the House of Commons could all have driven home together in a single hackney coach. "That," replied George Byng, "is a calumny; we should have filled two." I do not know the capacity of an eighteenth-century hackney coach, but one charabanc could accommodate the entire Liberal party in the House of Commons at the time at which I am writing. Twenty years ago this party was ruling the country in overwhelming strength, and four years later it twice put its fortunes to the test and each time came back with a majority which made its Parliamentary position impregnable.

What has happened, and why has it happened? Liberalism, says one, is an outworn creed which has had its day, and is very properly wound up. Liberalism, says another, is immortal and indestructible and will live on, though the Liberal party perishes. The Liberal party, says a third, has and
been ruined by the war and will come again, like the Whig

party, when we have recovered from the war. And so and so on. I will not attempt to decide, but I own I have very little belief in Liberalism being reincarnated in either a Labour party or a Tory party, if there is no Liberal party to secure it an independent existence. In politics the still small voice requires an organized expression, if it is to be heard in the din of conflicting classes and interests.

The tenacity with which organized Liberalism has held its ground against every kind of discouraging circumstance from the end of the war onwards seems to me to afford the best ground for hope, but it is important to face certain conditions in the modern public life which are unfavourable to the Liberal party. High among these I would put the decline of the public speech. There is probably a greater volume of oratory poured out on platforms and at street corners to-day than at any time in the world's history. But no orator in these days has anything like the influence on the public mind that Gladstone and Bright and Chamberlain had in my younger days. As things are, none can have. The new speakers may speak with the tongue of men and of angels, but the newspapers do not report them and the public consequently cannot read them. Lloyd George, whom one would suppose to be at least "good copy," may think himself lucky if he gets half a column in a morning paper for a speech taking an hour to deliver. This has been comparatively unimportant to other parties, for Toryism relies on solid interests which tell their own story, and Labour makes a class appeal which is correspondingly simple. But to Liberalism, which always depended on the preaching of the doctrine, it has been most damaging. To vast numbers of people in the last century the speeches of men like Gladstone and Bright were spiritual meat and drink, which kept the faith alive in a manner far more vital and potent than the programmes and material inducements of later days. Whether his theme was Ireland, or the franchise, or Turkish atrocities, Gladstone talked something that the whole country recognized as Liberalism, something that transfigured the party strife and made an appeal from the worse to the better side of its nature.

But correspondingly there was an audience which was receptive of this appeal. Behind the Liberal party was the solid phalanx of British Nonconformists and Scottish Presbyterians, who hitched their politics on to their religion and moved as a mass at the call of Liberal leaders. Their own leaders, Dr. Clifford, Dr. Dale, and thousands of lesser men had no scruple about talking politics from their pulpits, and they were perpetually on fire about religious equality in church and school. The conscientious objection movement sprang from them, and in the first years of the century there were resounding controversies and shattering crises about dogmatic and undogmatic teaching in the elementary schools. All that seems a century removed from us in these days. When the smoke cleared away and politics were started again after the war, the religious question had clean vanished from the scene. No one seemed to care whether Churches were established or disestablished, or what, if any, sort of religion was taught in the schools, or who paid for it. Churches and chapels alike complained that their congregations were dwindling and that they could only with great difficulty induce young men to join their ministries. Apparently the mass of people believed so little either in denominational or undenominational religion as to be quite indifferent to the controversy between them.

A good thing too, I can hear the younger generation saying; and I agree that after twenty years I could not easily rekindle my own emotions on these subjects, or the serious zeal with which I used to travel between Downing Street and Lambeth in humble efforts to find ways out of the interminable impasses into which they led us. I agree, too, that we are well rid of the bigotry and bitterness which too often disfigured this warfare. But comparing the former years with the latter, it seems to me that something of importance has been lost in this lowering of the religious temperature. It is so difficult to get rid of religious bigotry without getting rid of religion; and the light-heartedness with which the newcomers extrude the great body of disinterested doctrine preached by the old Liberals and substitute for it a purely materialist appeal to class interests, points to an eclipse of faith which is more important than the decay of any religious dogma.

II

Next among the causes unfavourable to Liberalism is the state of mind, following the war and learnt in war, which looks for great and sudden changes in place of the steady development on which Liberalism relied. This is so important that it is worth a brief analysis. When I was young, the radical workman had a strong contempt for foreign theorists and would have scorned to borrow his politics from Karl Marx or any German or Russian revolutionary. I can scarcely remember to have heard the words "capitalism" or "capitalist system" except in the lectures of professors of political economy in the first twenty years of my working life. In those days it was taken for granted that we lived in a world of employers and employed, whose relations it was desirable to improve if we could; and we thought of this not as a system invented by people called "capitalists" and to be destroyed by other people called "workers," but as part of the nature of things, and, like all parts, compounded of good and evil, and vice and virtue. Socialism was discussed in drawing-rooms, but it was the Socialism of "News from Nowhere" and "Looking Backwards," and no one supposed it to be practical politics.

The Fabians, who were next on the scene, made a special point of being practical politicians with a policy of "peaceful penetration," applied first to the London County Council and then to the Liberal party. They had great success and deserved it, and for a period we were all "collectivists," a blessed word which saved any searchings of heart about the foundations of society. A Liberal journalist like myself would be very ungrateful if he did not make his acknowledgments to the indefatigable programme-spinners of the Fabian Society. They were always willing to help, and left you free to pick and choose between their innumerable schemes, and did not even expect that you should acknowledge your borrowings. In my lifetime there have been no more disinterested and zealous servants of the public than Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Webb and Graham Wallas and certain others whom they inspired. Keir Hardie and his stalwarts of the

I.L.P. were much more intractable people, and it was they who started the idea of breaking with the Liberal party and hoisting the separate Labour flag. But up, at all events, to 1906 their complaint was rather that the Liberal and Radical pace was not hot enough and would not be, so long as employers and rich men dominated the party, than that the foundations of society were rotten. A reasonable accommodation between Liberal and Labour was still possible for the 1906 election, and if there were revolutionary Socialists in the Parliament that followed, they made no sign and I do not know their names. Whatever their ultimate opinions might be, the Liberal and Labour members of that Parliament were compelled to hold together against a determined and passionate Opposition; and both made the discovery that the programmes of these years could only with the greatest difficulty be carried in the teeth of it. With the daily problem of getting these programmes through, there was literally no time to think of more advanced proposals.

It may be true, as Labour historians assure us, that the seemingly dead or slumbering Marxian doctrine was coming to life again in these years and preparing the way for the challenge to the "Capitalist system" which Labour threw down after the war, but no such explanation is necessary. The four years' upheaval of the Great War blew governments and institutions sky-high all over Europe and inevitably exposed those that remained standing to searching questions. There is no reason to repine about this, and in the long run it may prove to have been good for everybody, but during the process of challenge and defence, the Liberal finds himself reduced to the position of *amicus curiæ*. He is neither plaintiff nor defendant, in this action. He wants neither the Labour dictatorship which would follow if Capital were defeated, nor the Capitalist ascendancy which would follow if Labour were disarmed. He dislikes equally the revolution which Labour proposes and the reaction from it in the Conservative party, and looks for a return to more sober politics when these two combatants are discredited or exhausted. In the meantime it is his special task to stand on guard for parliamentary government and other free institutions which, as events have proved, are easily sacrificed to their necessities.

It is evident that those who think on these lines cannot find rest or foothold in the other camps. Most of my own inclinations towards Socialism—and they were at one time pretty strong—have been quenched by Socialist propaganda and literature. It is my business as a journalist to be acquainted with Socialist theory, and to be a constant reader of Socialist newspapers and periodicals. With all possible allowance for the bitterness of the under-dogs and the utmost endeavour to realize what they must feel, the ill-will and uncharity which run through so much of the writing in these publications is to me very repellent. I find it extraordinarily difficult to believe that sane men with a feeling for humanity can seriously desire to kindle class-consciousness or foment class-war. Then the constant ascription of all the evils to which humanity is heir to a small number of people called capitalists and the consequent ruling out of all that the Victorians called self-help seem to me childish and unmanly. I do not in the least wish to palliate what bad employers have done to produce this attitude, but the assumption on which most of this doctrine appears to be based that the workman must always be on the defensive for something called his standard of living and never contribute to improve this standard, lest the capitalists should benefit, strikes the middle-class man as a counsel of despair which is in no way justified by the character and capacity of the British worker.

This may be put down to middle-class prejudice or lack of sympathy. But reason also rebels when one is asked to accept ideas about Government and society and the nature and sources of wealth which either fly in the teeth of experience or are plainly apocryphal when brought to the test of ascertained fact. For these reasons I cannot, as Massingham did in the last years of his life, join Labour in despair of Liberalism. I do not accept the Labour doctrine; I think the class-war detestable; I disbelieve in economic miracles; a party bound to trade unions and calling itself Labour is as repugnant to my Liberal ideas as a party calling itself Capitalist and bound to landlords or brewers. The Tory party is too skilful to call itself by that name, but it comes so near it in fact, and its Protectionist creed places it so much at the mercy of selfish interests, that I am driven also from that refuge. What, then, am I and the likes of me to do? I can only answer, to try our utmost to keep Liberalism and the Liberal party alive, and to save it from being merged into the other parties. By so doing we may carry on a tradition which neither of them can be trusted to preserve, and eventually come again as the Whigs did in the nineteenth century.

III

Exactly how is beyond prediction. None of us who are living in these times can be without what Morley used to call the "presentiment of the eve"—the sense of great changes coming. Modern capitalism, though it has to an enormous extent transformed the nature of property, still clings to the pre-capitalist theory of property. It still talks and thinks as if it were absolute master and owner, though nearly all its "values" are estimates of future earnings which assume and depend upon the co-operation of Labour. At the same time the modern employer carries on the feudal tradition which he inherited from landlords and is in perpetual friction with trade unionists demanding an equal status and a share in the management of what he considers to be his private affairs. This cannot last. The fact that wealth is a co-operative product must find expression in the structure of industry, and the industrial masters, like the political sovereigns, share their power and be content to reign as constitutional rulers. It is an enormous and very difficult change, needing patience and forbearance on both sides, and those who want to make it sudden and violent had better take warning from Russia and Italy that they will only be substituting one autocracy for another. Here, again, the question is whether we can learn of other people's experience or must make disastrous experiments on our own account before we find the right road.

I am often asked whether I have not lost faith in democracy in the stress of these days. The answer requires a definition of what is meant by "faith" and "democracy." For myself, I have never for a moment regarded democracy—by which I mean representative government based on a wide suffrage—as a solution of the problems of government. I have regarded it as the system which gives a civilized and reasonably well-educated people the best opportunity of securing fair and just government and of expressing its own character through its government. And so I still regard it. To me, liberty and self-expression are things which have a value in themselves, and the loss of which would be a real deprivation. It may be that Italians and Spaniards and Russians are rightly judged by their masters to be incapable of governing themselves intelligently, but I cannot imagine myself being a citizen of Italy, Spain, or Russia without feeling that I had suffered a serious loss of self-respect in making the submission required by their rulers. This seems to me the normal human way of feeling about government, and I think it ought to be expressed in the forms of government.

Democracy, moreover, has the great merit of upholding the theory that human beings as such have a value which is not to be measured by the inequalities of rank and wealth. It is among institutions like the holy city of Puri in India, in which caste is suspended and the Brahmin and the outcaste meet on equal terms before their Maker. To have a constant reminder in the theory of the State that the humblest and meekest of its citizens may have a worth which places him above the highest and wealthiest of his fellows is a great thing and a noble thing and a Christian thing. Morally, I can think of no greater set-back than that humanity should be declared or proved incapable of it.

But as fine things are difficult and the corruption of the best is the worst, one must look the facts in the face and try to measure them coolly. There have been two great surprises about democracy in our time. The first is that it came triumphantly out of the war; the second that, so far, it has made so poor a business of the peace. Fifteen years ago theorists would have predicted the exact opposite of both these things. They would have said that democracy would be weak in war and strong in peace; they would have predicted its collapse before the stronger discipline, but they would have said that if it survived it would treat its enemies mercifully and indulgently. On the contrary, the military autocracies went down testifying in their last gasp to the superior staying power of democracy, and the triumphant democracies made the Treaty of Versailles. In 1918 and 1919 the British democracy proved incapable of the moderation which the victorious aristocrats, Castlereagh and the Duke of Wellington, insisted upon after the Napoleonic wars.

If we reflect on this history, we may find it not quite so puzzling as it seems. Democracy was strong when governed by the simple and emotional appeals of war-time, and weak and fumbling when faced with the intricate and perplexing problems of the peace. Excited by competing politicians, its war-time emotions flowed over into the peace and were allowed to govern economic problems which could only have been handled wisely in a cool and scientific atmosphere. The history of German Reparations shows the consequences. For six years politicians clung to romantic illusions in the teeth of expert advice, and by so doing reduced finance to confusion, shattered currencies, confiscated the property of innocent people and produced untold misery and bitterness. Some of them may have acted in pure ignorance, but in general their excuse was that democracy would not bear to be told the truth. This is not, I think, the proved fact, but it is in most countries the undoubted teaching of experience that politicians will not dare to tell democracy unpalatable truth.

Government by experts would be a detestable thing, but this experience undoubtedly suggests that democracy needs some machinery whereby politicians should be compelled to defer to experts on their own ground The burden we are placing on popular government is one that it cannot be expected to carry with its present mechanism. Every journalist knows that as the circulation of a newspaper increases, the appeal to its readers must be on simpler and broader lines. But whereas journalists can, to a certain extent, control their subject matter, Governments cannot. As their constituents have increased, their subject matter has become more difficult and intricate, and the attempted simplification of it leads to the violent and dangerously distorted partisan "slogan." Governments meanwhile are alternatively defying expert opinion and deferring to it on highly important matters in ways unknown to the public. There is, for example, a general agreement among men competent to judge that the return to the gold standard was fraught with greater consequences to millions of men and women than any other act of Government in these years, and if ever there was a subject which should have been laid open to public debate and the consequences of one course of action or another explained in simple terms before action was taken, it was surely this. Action, nevertheless, was taken privately on the advice of unknown experts, and the country found itself plunged unawares into confusion and strife which might have been avoided if its mind had been prepared.

IV

Flying in the teeth of experts and acting privately in deference to experts are equally ways of disaster for Governments in democratic conditions. What, then, is the way of safety? More and more one's mind revolves round this problem, and I think I see some light in an analogy from the law courts. There, when counsel have presented their cases, there is a judge to sum up, to simplify the issues and present them fairly to the jury. In politics there is nothing between counsel and jury. This did well enough when the constituencies were small and the issues few and simple, but it breaks down when the constituencies are immense and the issues difficult and complicated. No analogy must be pressed too far, but the necessity for some permanent authority detached from party politics which shall disentangle fact from opinion, take out of controversy what is ascertained fact, gather up experience, concentrate it on the problem of the hour and define the consequences of alternative courses of action in simple and intelligible terms, seems to me very urgent. Royal Commissions and special Committees do not fill this gap. We need as a regular part of the machinery of government a permanent body, railed off from politics, with the best brains at call, whose definite business it shall be to issue periodic reports on the economic condition of the country, and to bring all possible light to bear on proposals immediately before it. Such a body would have to be equipped with an adequate census of production and an apparatus of serviceable statistics far more perfect than any that Government Departments now command. But thus equipped it would bring to government the element of science of which it is sorely in need and enable questions to be put to electors in a form in which they would be competent to answer them. This would not ensure us against human error, but it would at least check the demagogues and prevent them from playing on an ignorance which they do not share.

But all the systems are liable to demagogues, and we shall not be rid of them by reacting violently from democracy. So far as my own opinions have changed, it has been towards realizing that, whatever the system, government is a far more difficult and intricate business than I thought when I was young. Coming on the scene towards the end of a long sheltered period in which nothing fundamental had been questioned, one was tempted to believe that many questions had been finally answered which had in reality been shirked, and that many institutions were firmly established which were in fact very insecure. I feel now that we are only at the beginning of some things we thought finished, and that the art of government in particular is still in its infancy. But I have none of the sense which appears to afflict so many men of my age that the world is senile or decadent and doomed in the next generation to a twilight period of fading out. Rather it seems to me exuberant and young, full of an energy of breaking and making which, however disturbing it may be to individuals who are growing old, is essentially youthful. Looking back on the recent years, I cannot believe that any country in which the spirit of youth was not alive could have restored its credit, carried its immense burden of debt, supported its unemployed, improved its standard of living and provided a large margin for sport and pleasure, as this country has done in the years since the war. That it brims over in places and provides us with new and perplexing problems is the natural other side to it, but the same spirit that creates these problems will, I am confident, solve them.

How can we harness opinion to knowledge and steady the emotions of the multitude with experience and science? This, it seems to me, is the master problem of our time.

CHAPTER XXXVI

RELIGION AND LIFE

Religious Controversy in Childhood—A Battle and a Truce—H. B. Swete and His Influence—Difficulties of Belief—Changes in Forty Years—Is Religion Declining?—A Stumbling Block to the Poor—The Sermon on the Mount and Modern Life—The Clergy and Public Affairs—A Not Impossible Religion.

I

IN the last chapter I spoke of the decline in the religious temperature as a feature of recent years. In this concluding chapter I will endeavour to set down certain thoughts on this subject, starting, as I must, from my own experience and observation. The changes of religious belief have influenced all affairs, big and little, public and private, in these years, and they have gone deeper and spread more widely than is generally realized.

From my early childhood I lived in an atmosphere of religious controversy. The "Tracts for the Times" had a place of honour in my father's library, and his mind dwelt on the Oxford movement and the rediscovery of the Catholic tradition in the Church of England. In my last talks with him in the middle of the Great War he was still deploring the secession of Newman, and anxiously considering the point at which he took the wrong road. My father's family had a variegated religious history. His father, starting life as a Churchman, had taken to reading German philosophy, which had the curious result of turning him into a Congregationalist. But he sent his son, my father, to King's College, London, and there in the early 'forties he fell under Tractarian influences, and remained under them for the rest of his life. Like many of the old High Churchmen, he disliked ritualism and was not at all fond of going to church. He would go to an early communion service or to some other short service which he had satisfied himself beforehand would not last more than forty minutes. If it was a minute longer, he sighed audibly and watched for the first opportunity to walk out. Being a doctor he could do this without scandal, but his motives were seldom medical.

He was very anxious that his children should be taught the true doctrine of the Anglican *via media*, and he spent much time in explaining to us the niceties and subtleties which carried it safely through the channel (of "no meaning" as Newman finally said) between the Scylla of Rome and the Charybdis of Protestantism. Unfortunately at this time in Bath there was no church which was not either very high or very low, and since my father disliked Protestantism a little more than ritualism, he consented rather reluctantly to our going to an "advanced church," at all events on Sunday mornings. But no sooner was this settled than a sharp conflict set in between him and my grandmothers, both of whom were deeply evangelical and had a high sense of their religious duty to their grandchildren. This made life difficult for my father, and one day he consented to end it by a compromise. We were to continue to attend the ritualistic church in the morning, but in the evening we were to go to "the Octagon"—the famous old proprietary Church of England chapel in Milsom Street, Bath—where a North of Ireland Protestant expounded the true evangelical faith. To make everything easy, one of the grandmothers rented a large semi-circular pew (with a fireplace in it) to accommodate four of us in this chapel, and for the next two years we went, as these elders decreed, to the high church on the Sunday morning and the low church on the Sunday evening. And then, that no part of the Sabbath should be lost, one of the grandmothers held a bible-class in the afternoon which also we had to attend. The day was prolonged and contentious, and we hotly debated among ourselves about the respective merits of the two places of worship. I am afraid in my own thoughts it came to a weighing of the delights of the round pew with the fire in it—which we furtively poked—against the charms of high ritual and candles burning in daylight.

I cannot remember that I felt any religious emotions at this time. I disliked the Gregorian chants—or at all events the manner in which they were sung—at the high church, and felt the dreariness of the mumbling at the low church. The preacher in the latter was an immense man in a black gown—very kindly out of the pulpit—whom we called the bull of Bashan. His discourses were more exciting than the sacramental arguments of the high church clergy, but on the other hand there was some interest in watching for "Catholic" audacities which could be repeated to our grandmother at the afternoon bible-class. The general impression I got of religion in these years was that of something extremely confused and argumentative in which nothing could be stated without being disputed. A little later the high church took me for confirmation and for a few months I came under the influence, but the devotional books given me for the communion service were highly unsuitable for a boy, and I reacted violently from them.

When I was fourteen, my cousin and godfather, Henry Swete, afterwards Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, invited me to spend the Easter holidays with him at Caius College, Cambridge, where he was Dean and Tutor. I stayed with him in College, dined every evening at high table, and sat next to a senior wrangler. It was immensely exciting, and I wandered all over Cambridge, exploring it with a thoroughness which no undergraduate would have dreamt of. My cousin was the gentlest and kindest of men, and gave me all the time that he could spare from his busy and learned life. Among his books was a small but very choice collection of manuscripts—gospels, books of hours, fragments of liturgies—and very patiently he taught me to read some of these, explaining the abbreviations and the differences in the writing of different periods. The study fascinated me, and I remember the thrill with which I handled these lovely books and turned the pages for the illuminated letters and exquisite little pictures. I even went to the length of learning to write Greek in the manner of a Celtic gospel, and the following term sent up a copy of Greek verses written out in that style to my Headmaster, who very rightly rebuked me for this pretentious vanity.

My cousin seldom talked religion to me, but I have never before or since met anyone who instilled it so gently and naturally or invested it with such charm and refinement. Though his learning was vast, his literary instinct was unquenched, and his memory was stored with delightful snatches from early Christian hymns, prayers and liturgies which had an enchanting twilight sound. I am afraid I misled him by my literary pleasure in these things, for he seemed to take for granted that I should follow in his footsteps and live the life of a scholar and theologian. He moved from Cambridge to a country living a little later, and for two years I spent part of my summer holidays with him and took a class in his Sunday school, and joined in the ceremonial of his church. Insensibly in these visits I slipped back into his devotional atmosphere and felt its charm and peace. But everything else in these years was pulling the other way, and I became conscious of a certain duplicity which ended in my telling him rather abruptly one day that I was not what he thought me to be, and had no idea of following the clerical profession. He was as kind and gentle as ever, and tried neither reproaches nor persuasion, but I felt that I had disappointed him. To the end of his life I scarcely passed a year without paying him a short visit, and I never entered his house without the old sense of slipping back into the ages of faith.

Religion never ceased to be *the* subject at home, and my father stood on guard for orthodoxy. There was a day of terror when he discovered Renan's "Vie de Jésus" among my books, and took it in a pair of tongs and placed it on the back of the kitchen fire. But he let me keep the "Origin of Species" and the "Data of Ethics," and unwisely took in the *Fortnightly* (under John Morley's editorship), which I devoured from cover to cover. By this time the battle over our place of worship had ceased, and we were delivered to the school chapel and the Headmaster, whose method was to anchor his pupils firmly to ideas of conduct and public spirit as indefeasible things defying all scepticism, but after that to leave them free to "go wherever the argument led," provided they were honest and fearless. In his hands, religion and philosophy became one, and dogma went into the background.

Boldly he laid down the Platonic maxim that nothing was to be believed which attributed to God what would be mean and unworthy if attributed to men. It seemed simple and obvious, but the applications, which he left to his pupils, were shattering to a great deal that passed for theology. Much as I respected my father, I kept my own counsel with him, but my mother was an indefatigable searcher after truth, and debates begun with the Headmaster were continued with her at home. Her plea was always for the mystical something which distinguished religion from philosophy; but presently old Samuel Carter Hall came along and swept her into spiritualism, where I refused to follow.

II

Not all homes were like mine, but a great many young people brought up in the 'seventies and 'eighties went through the same process, and it is perhaps worth a little further consideration.

My own religious difficulty and that of many of my friends was not what our elders supposed. We were scarcely at all interested in Church controversies or dogmatic theology; our trouble was to get an idea of God which had any meaning or reality. I remember about my nineteenth year reading the passage in which Newman says that not to believe in God was to him as if he had looked into the glass and found his face not reflected there, and being obliged to confess to myself that I had no such feeling. I heard everybody about me talking of "atheists" as being beyond the pale of ordinary agnostics and unbelievers, and it gave me an uncomfortable feeling to think that I might be in this outer darkness. But the idea of God which seemed to be at the root of Christian theology, and of its doctrine of atonement, became more and more incredible to me, and I could see no use in definitions which, as in some of the creeds, seemed to be deliberately contradictory. It was one thing to say that God was unknowable and quite another to define him in terms which, if words meant anything, were mutually destructive. In these years certain passages in Dante seemed to give me a worthier idea of God than any religious book, even the Bible.

In later years Barnett kept saying that "to be without God in the world" was the great human calamity, and it was nearly all that he said about religion at Toynbee Hall. So also said Jowett in Balliol Chapel, but neither defined what they meant by God, and in Jowett's hands His image faded into a vague mist. I am wholly convinced that to be without God in the world is a great calamity, but the thought has never left me that to obtain a worthy and intelligible idea of God is for human beings a desperate difficulty which may well be the subject of a life-long quest. And looking back on the course of religious belief in my time, I should say that the great change has been a change in the idea of God.

It is, as I see it, a change from the idea of a terrestrial God to that of a God of the Universe. It runs parallel with the change which transformed the God of Israel into the God of all the world, and has been resisted by the same instinct as that which led Peter and James to resist the Pauline appeal to the Gentiles. In the atmosphere in which I grew up theology was as purely terrestrial as in the Middle Ages. It was still chained to the idea that this world was the centre of all existence and that the whole divine drama was being played out in it. The enormous extension which modern science has given to our ideas of existence has dissolved this theology without replacing it, and what is to replace it is the religious problem of our time.

It is, I think, the failure of the clergy to understand what has been going on in the minds of the religiously inclined laity which is responsible for the decline of organized religion in these times. For example, the controversy now going on about the revision of the Prayer Book passes over the heads of the great majority of intelligent and thinking people. They wonder that so much zeal and fervour should be spent on points of ceremonial and doctrine, and so little progress made in clearing religion of unbelievable and obsolete things. It amazes them that a revised Prayer Book should still contain the Athanasian creed and the Commination service, even as optional forms. One commonly hears economic causes assigned for the failure or decline in quality of candidates for ordination. I cannot believe this to be the truth, or any considerable part of it. Men of genuinely religious temperament have never recoiled from a life of poverty in pursuit of their mission, and the young men of these times have certainly as much of the missionary spirit as those of the previous generations. But they cannot honestly interpret the creeds and dogmas in the mediæval sense which the traditional Churches require, and they shrink from the modernist casuistry which would interpret them as allegories and parables. These men will only be brought back if the ground is cleared of creeds and dogmas which cannot be believed in a natural sense.

Is the world, then, less religious than it was fifty years ago? The question begs the question. The great mass of people were no more religious—as the orthodox use that word—fifty years ago than they are now; but undoubtedly the few are less orthodox now than they were then, and the clergy can no longer count on them to fill their churches. On the other hand, I should say that the few are more religiously minded than they were in my youth. They are more speculative, they think more about first and last things; they are less content with the supposed certainties either of science or religion. For them the one article in the creed which seems to gain a deeper and fuller meaning as the others fade is, "I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life." More and more their mind dwells on the Master's discourse with the woman of Samaria. They see the religion of the future as the religion of the Spirit—not merely something vague called the Life Force, but the "Holy Spirit," compelling us, in spite of everything, to think of it as holy.

More people than the Churches know of are, I believe, building for themselves a religion on this foundation; and to them the thought of a ruling spirit opens a world of reality which is far more wonderful than any dreamt of in the ages of faith. It enables them to think of themselves as sharing an eternal life which, though beyond human thought and not to be measured by it, has its intimations in the lives of men, the beauty of nature, the notes from beyond caught by art, poetry and music. For these there is peace in the thought of living conformably with the Spirit and furthering its purpose, and hope to be drawn from the supreme law which lets nothing run to waste. The human mind cannot grasp the idea of incorporeal existence, but it may reasonably believe that the human values are in some sense immortal, for the slaughter of affection and the extinction of individuality after the long agony of building it up, would be waste and cruelty which cannot be imputed to the Lord and Giver of Life.

This line of thought is not, in my belief, hostile to the Christian faith. On the contrary, the idea of a spiritual genius who has some special touch with the world of spirit becomes more and not less credible as a materialist theology decays; and the figure of Jesus retains its power as in this special relation with the unseen. Other things may pass away, but the need of the world for the mediator between the flesh and the spirit, between the temporal and the eternal values, will not pass away.

III

The war was, beyond doubt, the heaviest blow struck at religion in our time. All the Churches were intensely patriotic, and this was precisely the mischief. The spectacle of each of them in their respective countries standing with equal zeal and fervour for its own side, and their collective failure to find any vantage ground above the battle or to enter any plea for charity or mercy, made a profoundly cynical impression in its totality. Each man might believe that his own Church was right, but all men observed that the gospel of peace was helpless. No effective religious voice was raised in protest against the intolerance, the credulity and other excesses of the fighting spirit which the war brought with it; the Pope, who endeavoured to mediate, was assailed by all the sects and most of all by the members of his own flock. I am not reflecting on the work which was done by priest and padre in the trenches and hospitals—that was often beyond praise—I am speaking only of the collective impression left on the general mind by the failure to find any acknowledged religious ground in the human conflict. It seemed that religion as such had nothing to say and that its ministers were mostly engaged in stoking and sanctifying the secular passions.

Then in a shattering way war seemed to bring back the old dilemma about the omnipotent God. If He permitted this, the Almighty could not be the All-loving too. I opened the columns of the *Westminster Gazette* to correspondence on this subject and it flooded in on me. Some of the letters were marked "Not for publication," and they revealed the tortures of doubt and misery endured by men and women who had lost their nearest and dearest and saw the sun blotted out from heaven in a world which, they passionately protested, could not be work of a benevolent Creator. Theologians argued that it was part of the mysterious dispensations of this Creator that these things should be permitted, and that there could be no freedom in a world in which man was not free to destroy himself and his fellow-men; but they brought neither comfort nor conviction. The retort came that it must be within the power of the All-powerful to decree conditions which would enable freedom to be won at a less costly sacrifice, and the argument went out into the vague with a suggestion from the theologians that the sacrifice might be a blessing in disguise. The common mind demands a philosophy beyond its religion, and it has been more deeply stirred about the foundations of belief in this generation than, probably, in any preceding period. Theological statements which force what philosophers call "the antinomies" into a crude opposition must go, even if their place has to be taken by a candid avowal that the ultimate nature of things is unknowable.

Then another thing. Vast numbers have got it firmly fixed in their minds that religion is the tool of the propertied classes, and call history to witness the unceasing efforts of the secular powers to capture the spiritual and use them for their own purposes. Can it honestly be said that this is a bygone phase of religion or politics? Whoever tries to break loose from tradition and to read the gospels in their simplicity finds it flashing in on him that they are daring, original, paradoxical and revolutionary as no other religious literature in the world. Yet this explosive material is mostly in the hands of men of quiet and conservative disposition who consider conformity to the existing order to be a high virtue. It is small wonder if some of them avert their gaze from the Christian ethic and find refuge in preaching what is said to be the doctrine of the Church. This undoubtedly is the way of the quiet life and brings its own reward to the devout. But the Christian minister who from his village pulpit rebukes the farmer who stints his labourer, or the landlord who will not repair his cottage, or in other ways tries to bring the Sermon on the Mount into the doings of his little community, will have trouble all the way and be fortunate if he is not branded and shunned as a disturber of the peace. The Christian message must be highly generalized if those who deliver it are to escape trouble. A fashionable preacher may thunder about the sins of society to a crowded congregation and cause only a pleasant sensation by his admonishments, but the man who brings the gospel down from heaven to earth in his own parish will find his strongest opponents among his "best supporters."

It seems to be agreed among the orthodox that the Sermon on the Mount is an impossible ideal for a modern society, and much ingenuity has been spent in proving that Jesus could not have meant what He clearly has said. This is what comes finally of applying to moral teaching a method of interpretation which quenches the spirit in the letter. The Divine Teacher could not have meant what He appears to say, therefore it is concluded that He must have meant nothing, or something entirely different from what He appears to have said. The proof is, as a Bishop once said, that a modern State could not exist for a week if it adopted the principles of the Sermon on the Mount. Undoubtedly, but the Teacher is so evidently thinking not of the modern State, but of the inner life of men and women, and propounding a doctrine which is inexhaustibly true and healing for them and eventually for the modern State. He delivers His message in terms that are uncompromising and impossible for the actual human life, but precisely in that way He is bearing witness to the spiritual values which must be brought into this life if it is to have any touch with the eternal. This sense of the clash between the spiritual and the material is—it more and more seems to me—at the heart of Christian teaching, and the softening of it to make a comfortable religion for the State and its well-to-do citizens the chief cause of its failure to touch the multitude. They see all that side of Christianity stressed which counsels meekness and submission, or which transfers the entire moral issue to another world, and few or no voices raised to rebuke the covetous and overreaching, the violent and uncharitable in this world.

For this reason I have never, as a journalist, joined in the rebuke to ecclesiastics for intervening in secular affairs. I think they had far better intervene and take the risk of being battered in secular controversy than let the idea go abroad that religion has nothing to say in controversies which raise great moral issues. They can always be relied upon to appear when politics touch the ecclesiastical sphere—Church schools, Church establishments and so forth—and the contrast between their activity on these occasions and their silence on others has been a great disservice to religion in my time. As I see it, they were perfectly right in raising their voices for peace in the General Strike, and their intervention in no way encroached upon the proper duty of politicians to see in what way peace could be made. They were on different ground when they entered into the details of the Coal dispute, but again I think they were right to take the risk. On this secular ground they must expect to be met with secular argument and not give themselves the airs of spiritual authorities, but so far as they are plainly endeavouring to find a way of peace, they are doing a religious work which is within their sphere. But it is not merely bishops and clergy or the ministers of other denominations upon whom the religious cause rests in these times. I can never read the last word of the gospel, "Go ye into all the world," without the thought coming into my mind that in some century of the future there may arise a new preaching order which will go from nation to nation and city to city preaching the simple duties of kindness and charity. The unkindness, the bitterness, the uncharity which have clouded human relations in recent years, and the unthinkable suffering which has resulted, are what most depress the spirits in thinking of these times. There is no purely political remedy for them, and if the world is to be saved, the religious spirit must somehow be enlisted in the act of "conversion" which is necessary to its peace.

* * * * * *

In a volume of Essays published twenty years ago, which still has a modest circulation, I made a fictitious character quote the saying of Aristotle that men, even if mortal, "must as far as possible live as though they were immortal," and say that in all literature there were no words which had affected him so profoundly throughout his life. The Greek words ἔφ’ὅσον ἐνδέχεται ἀθανατίζειν are deeper and more expressive than any translation, and embrace all that a modern means by the eternal life. They still seem to me to combine in an extraordinary way both the practical and the speculative sides of religion. Men may live in the temporal, but in all their processes they bear witness to the eternal. Their human origins are far in the past; they cannot plan or invent or act together for the family or the State without projecting themselves into a future which lies beyond their mortal existence; they cannot read or think without being caught up in a stream which is flowing out of the past into a future beyond the horizon. However much or little religious dogmas may correspond with the unthinkable realities, the working hypothesis for a man in this life is that he is immortal, and it seems to me a rational belief that this hypothesis is in truth the reality.

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